



## THE MARCH OF A NATION



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*My Year of Spain's Civil War*

By

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with the Nationalist Forces in Spain

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## THE MARCH OF A NATION



## THE RISING, JULY 18, 1936

IN the spring of 1936 the so-called Spanish Popular Front gained a scanty nominal victory at the polls. Radicals, Socialists, Communists, and even Anarchists, in alliance, had put to the best use the anomalies of the Spanish electoral laws, and the wave of discontent due to unemployment and economic depression, to snatch a majority of seats in the Cortes. Actually, they had failed to obtain a majority of votes throughout the country. The total votes cast for the Popular Front were 4,356,000, while those for the Right and Centre were 4,910,000. On this showing the parties of the Right and Centre should have had a majority of seats, but owing to the Republican electoral law the seats were at first distributed as follows: Popular Front 256, Right and Centre 217. Thus the so-called reactionary parties had over 500,000 more votes but were given some forty fewer seats. Worse was to come. When the Cortes sat, the commission for the verification of mandates got to work. It had been carefully "packed" for the occasion, and it gave Right seats away to Socialists and Communists with glaring partiality, so that when the Cortes was finally constituted the Popular Front found itself the unabashed possessor of 295 seats, while the Right and Centre, for all that they had polled 500,000 more votes, had merely 177 seats. This was the great triumph of the Popular Front at the polls in February 1936.

There was nothing surprising in this, for the Spanish



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revolutionaries have never been a majority in Spain. They have always prated about the voice of the people and of the right of majorities to rule, but they have always exercised power by gross electoral frauds and by imposing the will of a minority on the rest of the people. The downfall of the monarchy followed the first municipal elections in Spain, after the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, when actually the vote of the people showed a clear and impressive majority in favour of the retention of the monarchist principle. Thus the Spanish Republic was founded on the fraudulent assumption that a Left majority in a few cities had the privilege of overruling a great monarchical majority in the boroughs and country districts.

From the moment that the Popular Front government took office it was visible to anybody acquainted with Spain and with Spanish history that civil war could not be far away. The revolutionary parties in Spain can never control the unruly and criminal elements which form the main part of its marching left wing, and it was certain that Spain was about to face another period of murders, burnings and public disorders in general.

It must be remembered that the Spanish race is a strange ethnological medley. Standing as it does on the extreme west of the Mediterranean, the great pathway of the ages, the Iberian Peninsula has seen more invasions and more settlements, possibly, than any other European country. Many of these invasions have been Asiatic and African in their origin. The Carthaginians, themselves Semitic, brought in their legions countless Asiatic tribes, while the Moors were only a little more eclectic.

Spain grew up through the "reconquest" on feudal lines which, though influenced and altered by local

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conditions, would not have seemed strange to a Norman or a German baron. Sometimes traces of Scandinavian law, as along the Basque coast, altered the conditions of chieftainship and of land transfer, but the general conditions were European and not Semitic, Asiatic, or Moorish. The Moors and the Jews found themselves out of touch with the new régime and oppressed. But this was nothing to the secret and unseen struggle which must have gone on in thousands of heads and hearts, all the more powerful because it was unsuspected even by the persons themselves, between Asiatic and African longings and impulses and the new laws of restriction and self-denial.

Spain is a deeply religious land, and yet from time to time throughout the ages when there has been revolution, these suppressed emotions of savage cruelty, of Asiatic barbarity, have come to the front. They are always most noticeable in those parts where the mixture of Asiatic and African blood is the strongest. That is why Navarre and the Basque countries, Old Castile and Aragon, Leon and the Asturias, have been freer than other Spanish provinces of the terrible blood guilt which during the past year has afflicted Spain. It is necessary to interpose here that the so-called Asturian miners who have rendered themselves so notorious are seldom of Asturian descent, and that the vast majority of the real fixed inhabitants of that province are Right and Nationalist.

As long ago as 1929 I pointed out the inevitable association between Republicanism and disorder and massacre in a long conversation I had at that moment with Señor Alexander Lerroux, then a prominent leader of the Republican Party, striving to upset the monarchy and

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send King Alfonso into exile. He was to succeed only too well barely two years later.

Señor Lerroux, when I spoke to him of the downfall of the first Spanish Republic, due entirely to national reaction against its violence and its excesses, prophesied that the new Spanish Republic would be conservative and would stand for public order and the respect of life and property. "If it does not," he went on, "if it becomes Socialist or Communist it will be swept away, for Spain will not tolerate mob rule or Communism."

The same Señor Lerroux seven years later, after he himself had taken part in the Republican government of his country and had witnessed fresh examples of the blood lust and ferocity of his allies of the Left, has had once more to proclaim that the real Spain will not accept such atrocities. Asked for a statement on the National movement, this is what he says. "It is by no means a question of a military pronunciamiento, but of a national rising as legitimate and holy as the War of Independence in 1808. It is even more sacred, for it is not a question only of political independence, but of social and economic organisation, of the protection of home, property, culture, conscience and very life; in a word, of a whole civilisation as handed down in history."

The summer of 1936, therefore, found Spain with an extreme Left government, apparently firmly in power, and with murders and the burnings of churches going on all over the country. Even at that moment had the Government announced its firm intention of suppressing disorder, of dealing with the Communist menace—everybody knew that the Communists were planning a *coup d'état*—it is possible that it would have found support not only in the country but from responsible Army leaders.

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But the Government not only refused to see the Communist danger, not only refrained from taking action to punish the criminal leaders of the bands that roamed about the country, with murder and arson for their objectives, but actually embroiled itself in political murder.

Without waiting for the meeting of the Cortes, Señor Azana, the President, who has now abandoned all power and initiative and who has spent the war skulking in reclusion in palaces at Madrid, Valencia and Montserrat, but who was then only a party leader, seized power. Mob violence was immediately set loose. In Madrid churches and a newspaper office were burnt down, while at Granada eleven buildings were set on fire in a single day.

Here is the balance sheet for the first six weeks of Popular Front government in Spain:

### Assaults and robberies:

At political headquarters . . . . .	58
Public and private establishments and dwellings . . . . .	105
Churches . . . . .	36

### Fires:

At political headquarters . . . . .	12
Public and private establishments and dwellings . . . . .	60
Churches . . . . .	106

### Disturbances:

General strikes . . . . .	11
Risings and revolts . . . . .	169
Persons killed . . . . .	76
Wounded . . . . .	346

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When the Cortes met and when it became increasingly apparent that the Government not only did nothing to stop such crimes but appeared actually to be encouraging them, the Opposition members began to protest. They did so in face of daily threats of violence. They were howled down by their men and women comrades, the latter being foremost in giving the example of mob brutality. Time and time again they were told they would not leave the Cortes building alive. Pistols were levelled at them, and the Government took no steps to restrain this violence, the vilest of insults were hurled at them in the Cortes itself, and there were no rebukes even from the president of the so-called parliamentary assembly.

The final protest was made by Señor Calvo Sotelo, the brave and talented Royalist leader, on July 11. It was the signal for his death and thus directly for the outbreak of the Nationalist movement. By that time, five months after the Azana government had taken power, the list of disorders showing to what a state Spain had been reduced was as follows:

- 113 general strikes,
- 218 partial strikes,
- 284 buildings burned,
- 171 churches, 69 clubs and 10 newspaper offices  
completely burned down,
- 3,300 assassinations.

Señor Calvo Sotelo drew a graphic picture of the evils that Spain was suffering, and demanded from the Government a promise that steps would be taken to bring these disorders and these crimes to an end. Señor Casares Quiroga, then Premier, only answered by a threat of

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violence "You will be held personally responsible for the emotion which your speech will cause," he said, at the same time as that female fury Dolores Ibarruri, since notorious for her hysterical thirst for blood, and perhaps more notorious as "Pasionaria," shouted "That man has made his last speech."

She was right. On July 13 a police car, number 17, arrived at Señor Calvo Sotelo's house with fifteen Assault Guards under Captain Moreno. They were admitted to the house and went to Señor Sotelo's room to invite him to go with them to police headquarters. Señor Sotelo's wife wished to telephone to the Government, but was prevented from doing so. Unresisting, the Monarchist leader followed the police. Later Casares Quiroga professed ignorance of the whole affair, but the body of Calvo Sotelo was found with a bullet through his head in the eastern cemetery. In the circumstances, there are few who can believe that the Government was not at the very least cognisant of the plot, even, if they were not, which is more probable, its instigators. The crime sent a wave of indignation throughout Spain just at the psychological moment.

Leaders of the Army, moderate men like Queipo de Llano, Mola and Franco, had come to the conclusion that something had to be done to restore law and order before it was too late. In other words, insurrection had become the most sacred duty of the Spanish people.

~ Officers had been sounded throughout the country, and the great majority of them were in favour of a movement which, taking the form of a Junta of Defence, would substitute itself for the weak and criminal Government of Madrid. The Communist menace was looming every day larger. It appears that originally the Army

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movement had been planned for August, but when it became known that the Communists were preparing to rise throughout Spain at the end of July it was necessary to hasten things

As originally proposed, the Nationalist movement would have been widespread and capable of bringing instantaneous success. Possibly the necessity for taking action a full fortnight before the date first fixed left a number of threads loose in the conspiracy. Certainly the degree of preparation of the Communists and Anarchists was greater than had been suspected.

It had been hoped that the whole fleet would stand in with the Army, while it was expected that both Madrid and Barcelona, as well as the ports, would be overawed by the display of military strength, coupled with the menace of the naval guns. Everything at the outset did not, however, go in accordance with plan. In some cases generals in command wavered and hesitated and lost golden opportunities. The crews of many ships, won over to Communist doctrines, rose and, murdering their officers, took control. Freedom of sea communication, which would enable the well-disciplined troops from Spanish Morocco to be brought across by transport within a week, was jeopardised

In Barcelona, General Goded, energetic though he was, appears to have hesitated for some fateful hours. The police and Civil Guard, finding themselves without that bold direction they expected from the Army, went over to the Catalanian Government, and the movement in the whole of that province was submerged in an ocean of blood. It is not my intention to write at length about the massacres and the orgy of crime which took place in Barcelona and other places like Malaga, Valencia and

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Alicante, where the Nationalist movement failed. They have already been recorded in part, but the full tale of the reign of terror inflicted by the Reds on those unfortunate populations, the list of their crimes against women, children and old men, cannot be completed until order has been restored and all those witnesses who are still alive have been heard.

But while in the east and at Madrid the movement had apparently failed, it had succeeded in the south and in the north. Old Castille was practically solid for the Nationalist Anti-Red cause. In Navarre the Carlists, a great and growing force, had risen to a man, first to defend their own homes from Red invasion, and secondly to join in the general movement to extirpate Marxism from the rest of Spain. On the night of July 18, when the message went from city to city announcing that the Army had risen, the tocsin sounded in every church through the length and breadth of Navarre. It sounded on the mountain-tops and in the valleys, and an hour later the young men with their scarlet berets were marching off under the orders of the village elders to occupy the passes and the roads along which the Reds might advance from Catalonia on the east, Madrid on the south, and the half Red, half Home Rule Basque provinces to the west.

The young men of Don Antonio Primo de Rivera, the Spanish Falangists, in their blue shirts embroidered with the five arrows in scarlet, had sunk their political differences and offered the support of all their forces throughout Spain to General Mola. Their leader was in that prison in eastern Spain which he was never to leave alive, but he had built well and loyally, and all his men took up arms for the defence of national ideals.



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This, therefore, was the strength, at the outset, of the two sides. The Reds, apparently, held most of the trump cards. They had the central Government in Madrid, they had all its money and resources. Behind them was the weight of the Red town populations, with their syndical and political organisations. They had part of the Army and Civil Guard, most of the ports, and the majority of the fleet. Also, and not negligible, at the beginning, they had the majority of the then ill-informed public opinion of the world.

The Nationalists, on the other hand, held the greater part of the western and central agricultural provinces; they had the religious fervour and idealism of a compact Carlist Party, with its invaluable companies of sturdy mountaineers, they had the cohorts of the Falange Española, or the Spanish Phalanx, as Don Antonio's party is called, and, finally, they had the great majority of the Army.

In those first days, from the 18th of July to the 25th, the fate of the Nationalist movement was being decided. Three questions loomed before the generals and party leaders. A negative reply to any one of these three would have meant the failure of the movement and an era of murderous repression by the Madrid Reds, which would have plunged in blood the whole of Spain where, so far, law and order prevailed. These questions were: Could General Queipo de Llano hold Seville? Could General Mola retain his command over the naval arsenal of Ferrol? And, finally, could the Nationalists ensure the working of the railways and the supply of petrol needed for their immense columns of motor transport? The life or death of the movement depended on each of these three questions. Let me take them one by one.

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In Seville, General Queipo de Llano lived hours of history such as are given to few men. He and his assistants, many of them men of humble degree, saved Seville for the Nationalist cause, held the coast and the ports of Cadiz and Algeciras, and kept up contact with the loyal and well-trained African Army, on whose ultimate arrival in Spain so much depended.

I saw General Queipo de Llano a few days after he had consolidated his position in the south of Spain and when the danger of failure was only just behind him. From his lips, and later from many of his officers—men like Castejon, Tella and Melendez—I was able to piece together the story of those first epic days in sunny Seville. General Queipo de Llano, who had had a distinguished military career, is a tall man with broad shoulders. Ample iron-grey hair crowns a thoughtful face, seamed by years of military effort. He is one of those men who rarely smile, except with their eyes, and his have often a humorous twinkle which belies the cold impassiveness of his general aspect.

When the signal for the rising was given in Seville, General Queipo de Llano, owing to a variety of circumstances, and particularly due to the fact that the Azana administration had cut down Army effectives so ruthlessly, had barely 180 trained soldiers on whom he could depend. Acting with the vigour of his character, however, he used this handful of men to the best advantage and, seizing the strategic points of Seville, was able during the night of July 18 to overawe the teeming population, many of whom were Communists at heart and hundreds of whom were armed and actually preparing for the Red revolution planned to take place seven days later.

But it was obvious that reinforcements must be rushed

to the spot by the next morning, or else the bluff would be called and the General and his tiny garrison would be swept away. In his headquarters at the Captain-Generalship at Seville, a typical southern Spanish building with tiled walls, lofty carved ceilings and spacious white patios, General Queipo de Llano sat all night with the telephone to his ear while haggard officers brought him the pink slips from the field wireless set up in the street outside. The news was bad. It could not have been worse. Red ships flying the Madrid flag were patrolling the Straits of Gibraltar, in ships which had adhered to the movement the crews had mutinied and had trained their guns on Ceuta and other African ports so as to prohibit any embarkation of troops. From Cadiz and other places there came telephone messages reporting Communist armed concentrations; from the suburbs of Seville were frantic appeals for help as the Civil Guard were being attacked and overpowered by the Red militia. There were only 180 men with rifles to hold the city, and no prospect of help from Africa.

The night hours were passing, and still the General sat there, white-faced but grim. He shifted his tiny garrison from place to place to make it look more effective. At some points machine-guns were being manned by crews consisting of staff officers, with a lieutenant-colonel actually seated at the piece and a major handing him the ammunition. The flush of dawn was just appearing over the hills in the east when there came the roar of a great 'plane flying in from the sea. It was one of General Franco's Army transport 'planes and it was bringing a gallant little band to the rescue. Apart from the pilot and his assistant, there were eleven men in the 'plane. All of them were men of the Spanish Legion. At their head

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was Captain Melendez; there was one sergeant and one corporal, and the remaining eight were privates. Since then I have talked over the events of that day many a time with Captain Melendez in his dug-out in the front-line trenches of Madrid, or at a base hospital where he was being tended for one of his many wounds.

Of middle stature, slight in build but with steel muscles, Captain Melendez was for me the very picture of some fifteenth-century soldier of fortune. Pissaro or Cortés must have been of a similar type. Raven-black hair slightly brushed with grey, side-whiskers like interrogation marks cut short in the middle of the cheek, a chin with a slight cleft jutting out from under a smiling mouth, bushy black eyebrows looking somewhat quizzical over a pair of flashing, burning black eyes. A man rapid in speech and rapid and inflexible in action. A leader of men, I have seen him with his *bandera* or battalion of the Legion, and never have I seen such blind devotion as his men offered him. The Spanish legion mourn him now. He was killed in May 1936 near Pozoblanco in the province of Cordoba.

There was little need to give orders to such a man. Out of the 'plane, Captain Melendez mounted the machine-gun he brought with him, in the cab of a great six-wheeled lorry, ordered his men to jump in, and dashed off to the Captain-Generalship. There he was told what the situation was and in what suburbs the Reds were concentrating. "That is enough," he said to the staff officer "Give me a map and I will deal with them." Five minutes later the lorry was roaring through the streets at fifty miles an hour heading straight for the Red assembly point. Shouts rang out: "The Legion has arrived," and the legionaries shouted also. Within a breath of time all Seville, in true southern way, was ringing

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with the news, and already prudent men who had brought out their rifles to join with the victorious Reds were creeping home to hide them while they slipped off their Red armlets.

The machine-gun stammered and stuttered every time a hostile armed group could be seen at a street corner. The Reds were on the run in every direction. Changing from a blue lorry to a red, and then back into a green one, Captain Melendez and his little band circled the city at top speed, giving to the terrified Syndicalists the impression that several companies at least of the dreaded Legion were there. Within two hours the suburbs had quietened down, the armed men had disappeared, and the Civil Guards and the Blue Assault Police were breaking into the Trade Union headquarters and other Red meeting places without any opposition, and seizing the stands of arms and cases of ammunition prepared for the equipment of the Communist militia. Before twenty-four hours had passed, all the Red arsenals had been seized and all the weapons were piled in the courtyard of the Captain-Generalship, where they were being distributed to the Falangist and Carlist volunteers. The weapons bought and stored away by the Reds were to be used against them by their bitterest enemies. Captain Melendez and his legionaries had saved Seville. There were only five of them left when night fell. Three had been killed and others were in hospital. Melendez had a bullet through his left hand, but he refused to go to hospital for what he called a scratch, though when I saw him four weeks later he was still unable to use his left hand, and laughingly said that it had made him economical as he found it so difficult to roll a cigarette with only one hand.

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'planes had arrived, and a small but extremely efficient force was being built up under General Queipo de Llano, a force which, ultimately, when it grew to the strength of a division, was to march from the coast to Madrid. Major Castejon, whose column was to be famous so soon, was the second officer to arrive in the second 'plane, and soon he had three hundred men under his command. Seville had been saved; complete liaison had been maintained between General Franco in Africa and General Queipo de Llano in Seville; the control of the southern ports remained in the hands of the Nationalists. One great and vital asset for future victory had been secured. In six days arms and equipment for 4,000 volunteers and 200 tons of stores were also brought over by air to Jerez.

While all this was happening at Seville, there were bloody massacres taking place at Ferrol. Officers both of the Army and Navy, who were there, told me that they lived through such a nightmare that it was impossible for them to make any detailed report of exactly what had taken place. They could not even reconstitute the chronological order of events. The city itself changed hands from Red militia to the forces of the Army and back again half a dozen times. A dozen different battles were taking place in and around Ferrol between the Reds and the Nationalist volunteers, Falangists or Carlists. In the arsenal itself the confusion was even worse. Ships were fighting ships at ranges of one hundred yards. The fore turret of one ship might have a Red crew, and the rear turret might be controlled by Nationalists. Crews might mutiny and capture a ship for the Reds, and a half an hour later the officers who had taken refuge down below might rally a scratch fighting party of stokers and recapture it. Two Nationalist ships

blazed at each other for ten minutes before a frantic officer from a fighting-top was able to find out the situation by an exchange of signals.

In one of the dry docks was the *Almirante Cervera*, of which the Nationalists held control of the two turrets and the forward decks only. Mutinous Red members of the crew held the between-decks and the stern. A battleship, the *España*, then entirely Red, was shelling it from the other side of the harbour, and the turrets of the *Cervera* could not be brought to bear as they could not fire over the sides of the dock. Four sallies were made by the Nationalists to try to reach the dock sluices and open them, so as to float the *Cervera* sufficiently high in the water for her guns to be brought into action. Three times all the men were swept down by machine-gun fire from a Red position in the arsenal on shore, but the fourth time two young officers and two quartermasters succeeded. A party of blue-shirted Nationalist militia were marched on board at the last moment, and they besieged the Reds in the stern and finally overcame them. It was then found that even there the ship had been divided as, when the Reds surrendered, a small party of the loyal crew were able to leave a part of the engine-room where they also had been besieged.

Finally, the *Cervera* floated and brought all its guns to bear on the *España's* decks, and the mutinous crew in that battleship which, though old, was quite powerful, flew the white flag of surrender. At the same time, the fighting in the arsenal and the town died down. Ferrol was held for the Nationalists; the arsenal itself had not been too badly damaged, the ships, including two submarines, which were being built had not been destroyed, and General Franco had the nucleus of a navy to pit against



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the Red fleet, based on Valencia and Carthagená. Vigo was kept for the Nationalist cause as a port through which supplies could be sent. The Nationalist fleet was able after hurried repairs to put to sea, this time with complete guarantees as to the loyalty of its crews, and they were able to free the Straits of Gibraltar of Red vessels and thus ensure the safe transshipment of General Franco's first fifteen thousand men from Spanish Africa, and to keep the passage open for the reinforcements which continue to pour across to keep this expeditionary force of the Spanish Legion, of the Moorish Regulares and the Riff Rifles, up to full strength despite battle casualties. Once again, the fortunes of war were on the side of the Nationalists and they had escaped the terrible danger of losing Ferrol, their only arsenal, and thus completely losing control of the sea. At the present moment, the fruits of that victory can be seen, with all the Red fighting ships, almost without exception, lying up idle in Valencia or Carthagená, while the Nationalist fleet can shell and blockade Red ports and wreak havoc among the Red supply ships.

The third vital necessity for the Nationalists was of a civilian character. Could General Mola in the north force the railwaymen to resume work, keep the railway lines open to Vigo, and pour through the country the millions of gallons of petrol needed to keep the war machine going?

When I first hurriedly toured the north of Spain, for a few hours trying, probably foolishly and certainly in great ignorance, to make my way through the Red lines to the Patriot forces in the centre, no trains were running. The Madrid syndicates had ordered a general strike and this was being fully applied by all the railway workers.

General Mola rushed out a decree bearing his signature ordering everybody back to work under the dire penalty of instant execution under the code of martial law in the event of disobedience. The question was: would the workers obey, and, in the confusion of civil war, could sufficient goods trains be formed and run between Burgos and the western ports? For it was known that the supply of petrol in the country was insufficient for the huge demands of the Army motor traffic first, and, secondly, for the growing and insatiable consumption of the Air Force. General Mola, however, not content with issuing his decree, immediately appointed a small technical committee of railway engineers to whom he gave military rank and power, while the Civil Guard in all the territory under Nationalist control were set to the task of routing out all the railway workers and serving on them orders to start work at once. Twenty-four hours later the trains were running, and the first I saw, slowly climbing the steep gradient which leads from Briviesca to Burgos, was an immense train composed solely of petrol tanks. The situation was saved, petrol was being brought from the reservoirs of Vigo and Ferrol, and distributed throughout the country.

There is a different story as to how these reservoirs were refilled time after time during the campaign. The Madrid Reds had to pay in gold to Russia for every gallon of petrol sent to Valencia and Barcelona, while the Nationalist government was amply supplied with petrol on credit. This was due to the fact that intelligent financiers had realised that the Nationalists were going to win, and that the Nationalists would pay, very early in the conflict. In other words, Nationalist credit was good and the Red credit was bad.

## THE RISING

A word must be said as regards the speed with which volunteers flocked to the Nationalist side. At the outset undoubtedly it was the marvellously efficient help brought by the Carlist organisation in Navarre which counted most. Ultimately the Falangist militia, which provided some excellent fighting units, became the larger, but the strength during the first critical days lay with that splendid body of troops, the Navarre Brigades of Requetes, and they continued to show their mettle throughout the war.

On the first day of the movement there were 14,000 Carlists, equipped and armed with motor transport and with machine-guns. These were immediately placed at the orders of General Mola, while the Carlist Junta de Guerra was preparing additional *tercios* of Requetes. These formations have gone on during the war, and in the offensive against Bilbao there took part five Brigades of Navarre. The number of Requetes under arms and serving in various sectors now amounts to just over a hundred thousand.

As the National movement swept forward, as towns and villages were freed, the same desire to volunteer and help the cause was shown. Each city or district immediately set itself to work to set up and equip one new unit, usually in the south and centre, of Falangists.

It must be remembered that Nationalist Spain had until July of 1937 only mobilised five classes of conscripts, that is to say, young men between the ages of twenty and twenty-six, and that the bulk of the Nationalist army was at all times composed of volunteers. There is nothing to compel a young man under twenty to go to the front, or a man of over twenty-six. Yet there are youths from the age of sixteen and upwards among the Requetes and

## THE SPANISH WAR

Falangists, and older men to well past fifty. That is the best proof of the National enthusiasm, which does not need compulsion, but sends the Spaniard, whether he be aristocrat or workman, to the trenches to fight for the New Spain.

## THE RACE FOR THE GUADARRAMA PASSES JULY 25

FROM the outset it became clear that the war in Spain would be divided into sectors by the very geography of the country. When one takes a peninsula with an immense high central plateau, seamed with mountain ranges rising to six thousand and seven thousand feet in height, it is apparent that sweeping plans of campaign are not possible. All the generals who have fought in Spain, from Hannibal and Caesar to the great Napoleon himself, have had to modify their strategy to the physical conditions of the country.

It was obvious that the fighting for Madrid would have at first to be on the great semicircular range of the Guadarrama mountains. It was also obvious that there would be a secondary campaign between Aragon and Catalonia in the east, between Navarre and the separatists of Viscaya in the west, while in the south round Cordoba and Malaga, south and north of the great Sierra Moreno, there would be at the same time half a dozen minor fronts in existence.

But from the outset several points of importance stood out clearly. It was necessary for the Nationalists:

1. To reach the Guadarrama and bottle up the passes so that the Reds could not swarm over the plains of Castille and attack the provisional seat of government.

## THE SPANISH WAR

2. To capture Irun and San Sebastian early in the war so as to cut off at least that link with France and reassure the sober north.
3. To defend Saragossa and Aragon and cut direct communication between Barcelona and Madrid.



MAP SHOWING THE AREA OF SPAIN CONTROLLED BY THE NATIONALIST FORCES (SHADED) AND THE MADRID GOVERNMENT (WHITE) IN AUGUST 1936

4. To march by the roundabout line of the Guadiana valley and then up the Tagus valley, thus avoiding the mountains, to the relief of Toledo and the "bottling up" if not the capture of Madrid.

It is these operations, each of which, though strictly

## THE RACE FOR THE GUADARRAMA PASSES

military, also had its political motives and was finally shaped and fashioned by geographical factors, which I am about to describe in the following chapters.

It was on July 19, when the first news reached Europe of the Army rising, that the telephone rang in my Paris



MAP SHOWING THE AREA OF SPAIN CONTROLLED BY THE NATIONALIST FORCES (SHADED) AND BY THE VALENCIA GOVERNMENT (WHITE) IN JULY 1937

office and I received instructions from the Editor of the *Daily Mail* to go to Spain and find out what was happening. Accustomed to such missions, it did not take me more than a few minutes to pick up my valise, already half packed, and to catch my train. During previous trouble in Spain I had always managed to make my way through

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Irun and San Sebastian, even when the roads were cut by barricades and trenches, and I hoped this time to do the same and reach Burgos, which I had already learnt, from my agents on the frontier, was the centre of the movement. A feverish twenty-four hours' driving here and there in my car ended, however, in my being brought before a Red "Committee of Public Safety" seated in a school house at Irun. I was escorted there by a "comrade" in blue overalls, who was carrying a loaded and cocked shotgun of an antique and dangerous-looking pattern. The school hall was filled with some three-score workmen, students and youths, all carrying shot-guns, rifles, pistols and even blunderbusses. Many of them were lying on the floor wrapped in their ponchos, great cloaks roughly formed out of two blankets sewn together at one end, with a hole for the head, fast asleep, but with their weapons by their sides. Others were strolling up and down, ceaselessly rolling cigarettes, and the air was blue with smoke. Seated at a table in a corner were some youngsters loading and unloading their arms with inexperienced hands. I watched the rifle muzzles swing about in every direction, and decided that it was the most trying experience of my tiring day among the Reds. At one end of the room were some Red girls

They were plump and attractive, two of them very Spanish with raven black hair and great flashing eyes, and two of them very blond, so blond that the arts of the hairdresser had certainly been invoked. The tight-fitting blue jumper of one of them revealed not only gracious curves, but a heavy leather belt from which hung two ammunition pouches and a long, ugly, black automatic pistol.

"Is that your pistol, señorita?" I asked the girl. "Oh



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no," was her reply. "It belongs to my Novio." She then added with pride, "I could use it, however, if the Fascists were to attack us here." She and her companions were just pretty little dolls with about as much brains, but later in the campaign I was to come across other Red militia women of a different calibre and I was to find proved again the truth that in Revolutions, the bad and cruel women are ten times as bad as the worst of the men.

After a long wait, during which several comrades pressed on me wine and cigarettes which it took me considerable pains to refuse, I was told by a dirty-looking old man that the Committee of Public Safety of Irun was ready to receive me. I was ushered in and found them seated round a table busily engaged in copying, in a round and innocent child-like hand, a Red manifesto which they meant to set up. There were printing machines available in the town, but the men had all scattered and it was impossible to find a single compositor. They explained this rather deprecatingly to me. Then, in reply to my request that I be allowed to take the high road with my car and travel to Burgos, the grey-haired chairman, backed up by a hatchet-faced young man with red hair and spectacles, who I later discovered was the secretary of the Communist Party and a local schoolteacher, put forward a lengthy explanation for his refusal. "We have to protect ourselves against the Fascists who are attacking us," he said. "We have had to make many prisoners and to shoot many of them, and we cannot allow you, whom we do not know, to travel through our lines, see what we are doing and where our forces are, and then go on to Burgos. You might be carrying messages for them; you might be spying out the ground

for them. There are only two alternatives: either you go back to France, or else you will go to prison--and people do not stay long in prison these days."

I felt that argument was not much good, and I had already begun to realise, when I saw the assembly of young and old revolutionaries, with their fierce, grimy, unshaved faces, their motley uniforms and their collection of arms, some extremely modern like the sub-machine-guns and the parabellum automatics, down to old fowling-pieces at least a century old, and the great Spanish *navaja* or knife with its curved blade at least three inches wide in the middle and a full eight inches long, that Spain was not faced with merely a *coup d'état*, but with a civil war which might last months. So I left the Committee of Public Safety dipping its pens in the ink and painstakingly pursuing its task of copying inflammatory prose, and drove back to France.

It was vitally necessary for me to get across to Burgos, however, and so, late though it was, I decided to try one or more of the passes through the hills into Navarre until I found one through which I could obtain admittance. It was a long and disheartening task. Everywhere I went the frontier was closed. At places the French gendarmes and mobile guard, misinterpreting instructions, turned me back; at other places the Spanish *carabineros*, or else the Civil Guards, in their strange cocked hats, refused me passage. It was all the more aggravating as I could see the scarlet berets of Carlist friends only a few hundred yards away, and knew that I had reached Nationalist territory. At midnight I was in the picturesque French frontier town of St. Jean Pied de Port, and there found Nationalist sympathisers who offered to show me another pass, seldom used and most likely not guarded,

through which I might make my way down into the Baztan valley. At six in the morning we were off through St Etienne de Baigorre, and by one of the worst and most hair-raising mountain roads that I have ever taken, we slowly crossed into Spain. It was right that there were no Spanish guards on the heights, but we found them when we ran down into the valley below. They began by being astonished, and then they were alarmed. After immense argument I was able to prevail on them to send for their captain. At first, they had said that he was asleep and could not be awakened at such an early hour—it was just nine o'clock. He arrived, a huge man in creased pyjamas of a doubtful, faded blue. Never had I seen such a mop of curly black hair. It stood out on all sides of his head at least six to seven inches. His pyjama jacket was open and his torso was also thickly covered with hair in black ringlets. Add to all this, thick lips and a huge, flattened nose, and the picture was more that of some gigantic man from prehistoric days than merely a peaceful Customs officer. He looked terrifying, and he had a deep booming voice, but he proved extremely amiable, allowed my car to pass, told the Civil Guards to mind their own business and leave all questions of papers to the authorities at Pampeluna, and then, after offering me some coffee which, with an eye on the doubtful cleanliness of all my surroundings, I prudently refused—I became less particular later—he bade me farewell and a good journey on my road to the capital of Navarre.

It was the first time that I took that enchanting road through the green Baztan valley with its frequent streams and its beautiful barrier of purple mountains, though within the next few weeks I travelled through it both by night and day over a score of times. First

comes the Otsondo pass, only 2,400 feet high but bare and bleak, and then down into the valley to Elisondo. This little town, which was a base for military operations in the direction of Vera and Enderlarza against Irun, has some claim to be known in history. For a long time it was the capital of the tiny Baztan republic which only disappeared in the seventeenth century. Prosper Mérimée chose it as the scene for his *Carmen*, and during the final phases of the Peninsular War British troops were garrisoned there, and it frequently saw Wellington, whose headquarters were only a few miles distant.

From Elisondo the road took me over the Velate pass and thence to the walls of Pampeluna. The sun was high in the heavens, and it was one of the hottest days I can remember. At every village and cross-roads my car was stopped either by Civil Guards or by peasants wearing the scarlet beret of the Requetes or Carlists. They were mostly sympathetic and friendly, eager to hear from abroad what was happening in their own country, confessing that they themselves knew nothing, except that they had taken up arms to fight for their religion and their country against the pagan Reds of Madrid and Moscow. In one village the guards had at their head their red-faced, white-haired old *parochio*, or vicar, who came forward when my car was stopped and questioned me in detail as to my journey. When he heard that I was an English journalist he apologised for his "needless suspicions," saying, "We have already stopped two cars containing Reds with their pockets full of dynamite cartridges, and have sent them under guard to the military authorities at Pampeluna."

On the top of the Velate pass there are barely half a

## THE RACE FOR THE GUADARRAMA PASSES

dozen houses. I came to know all their inhabitants quite well. There was an Italian who kept the little hotel and who, having been to the United States, spoke English fluently, and there were half a dozen *carabineros* or Customs officers under the command of a grizzled but amiable sergeant. They had little news on their mountain-top, and during the two months that I used the pass, often twice a day, I brought them cigarettes and newspapers. When the day came that Irun had fallen and that I could take the direct route to France, I felt the regret of losing an old friend, realising that I would not again cross those picturesque mountains of Navarre nor see the pleasant pastures of the Baztan valley, and that I would miss the honest smile and courteous greetings of that simple sergeant of Spanish Customs on the Velate road.

Pampeluna is only some fifty miles from the frontier, but the road is slow owing to the steepness of the gradients and the scores of hairpin curves, and with our numerous stops it was nearly noon when we drew up in the great square on the right-hand corner in front of the Hotel Perla, which was to be for so long the busy headquarters of the Press in Navarre.

The square itself was a sea of scarlet and blue. On the one hand were the red berets of the Carlists, and on the other the blue forage cap of the members of the Falange or Spanish Nationalist Party. All the young men were armed with rifle or pistol, but their weapons were clean and new and there was an air of voluntarily accepted discipline about them all which had been lacking in the Red militia I had seen the day before.

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With the vague idea that it was the right thing to do I went to the nearest police station to report my arrival.

I found it full of a motley crowd composed half of peasants and half of townspeople, and it was some minutes before I could make my errand known. I found that my presence caused no surprise, and I was merely told that if I stayed in the town over three days I ought to present myself again for the necessary authorisation. Next I called on the military headquarters, where my reception was not quite so cordial. Those I saw professed not to understand the reason for my presence, and gravely told me that no pass or permit could be given me unless I could bring forward two Carlists who would vouch for me. That was difficult, because for every name I gave them the reply was either "He is not a Carlist," or "He is not known in Pampeluna." I abandoned my attempt to satisfy them for the time being and said that I would return after luncheon. It was a wise decision, for in the crowded restaurant I recognised a Spanish journalist I had met three years before in Madrid, and an hour later I had the little slip of paper that I needed.

At the same time I gathered a great deal of valuable information. First I received news which determined my course of action for the next few days. I learnt that the military actions which were to take place were in the nature of a race between Nationalists and Reds for the control of the mountain passes north of Madrid, debouching into Aragon and Old Castile. With the exception of the Asturias, Bilbao, and the Basque country, all the west and north of Spain were Nationalist, and the Reds from Barcelona and Madrid would naturally try to send expeditions both north and west with the object of crushing the military movement in its main strongholds.

Secondly, I realised for the first time the strength of the National movement which was behind the generals



in the rising, and which linked to them all the forces of law and order in the country. I was fortunate enough to meet that very day over coffee, accompanied by half a dozen of his lieutenants, the head of the Carlist movement, Señor Fal Conde.

Historically the Carlists are the followers of Don Carlos who rose in arms just a century ago to try to impose him as legitimate and absolute monarch in Spain in the place of his niece Isabel. They were also the heroes of the second Carlist war of 1875 when, again, they were beaten after a fight which for bloodshed and bitter ferocity rivalled the first. Since then the Carlist creed, which seemed so strangely idealist and out of date in the twentieth century—a creed of faith, of family traditions, and of unfailing loyalty to a lost cause—appeared to be dying out. Carlist songs were still sung in the low-roofed farmhouse kitchens of Navarre, certain Carlist die-hards still refused to recognise Alfonso XIII, but it was said everywhere that their power had gone for ever. The rigours and the anti-religious laws of the 1931 Republic had, however, fanned those dying embers, and throughout Navarre and the centre of Spain the Carlist faith was burning once more bright and clear. An immense effort was made by their leaders to secure arms and equipment, and, knowing that there would be a life and death struggle against the Reds, Señor Fal Conde and the other leaders of the old faith and the century-old party met their rivals of the Falange and other Spanish political creeds and took a solemn oath that they would all of them lay aside all thought of party, and serve only Spain during the period necessary to loose the strangle-hold of the Reds and restore religion, law and order throughout the country.

Señor Fal Conde, whom I met at this historic moment

when the volunteer force that he had been preparing secretly during five years was actually taking the field, is a dark and somewhat melancholy-faced man of middle stature, with most expressive eyes. He greeted me enthusiastically as he said that he realised the necessity for the real facts of the case to be made known through the Press so as to sway world opinion. I have met him several times since, and indeed, two months later at Burgos he paid me the signal honour of admitting me as an honorary foreign member of the Carlist Party, giving me a scarlet beret of honour. "I do not forget," he said, "that I am a journalist too, and I know the value of the Press. During the first forty-eight hours of the movement we placed 20,000 young men, fully armed and equipped, at the disposal of General Mola, and we are raising other forces as fast as we can get arms for them.

"We Carlists, who stand for the old traditions," he went on, "have made great but willing sacrifices. We have abandoned for the time being our idea of the restoration of an absolute monarchy, but on the strict understanding that this movement is not to favour one or other of the different political parties, but is to establish an authoritative government.

"Moscow tried to instil Marxism and Communism in Spain so that the disease might spread to all other countries. We are going to drive it out of Spain. That is why we need an authoritative government. When we destroy the Common Front government we will first save Spain and then all Europe from the deadly contagion of Bolshevism."

The news that the fiercest fighting for the moment would be on the semicircular ring of mountains, known as the Guadarrama range, which lies north and west of

Madrid, made it essential that I should make my way south as fast as possible. Therefore after a hurried dash back to France to send off my first dispatches and to arrange for couriers with speedy cars for the carrying of further messages, I once more passed through the Baztan valley, and this time, not stopping at Pampeluna, I pressed direct south. I had a French car then and a French driver named Antoine who remained in my service for two months, until, in fact, the car, which had met with several accidents, was completely unserviceable. He was a cheerful and reliable man, an excellent driver, and spoke a little Spanish, so that he was often useful in collecting information for me from other chauffeurs. He took nearly as much interest as I did in moving about speedily and getting my dispatches back fast, and looked on all that part of our mission as a glorious and exciting game.

The first place we struck of importance was Soria, which stands some forty miles north of the mountain barrier. It had only just been captured from local Reds a few hours before, and a motor column of some four hundred lorries, cars and motor omnibuses was still pouring into it, bringing a few regular troops but mainly hurriedly formed companies of Carlists and Fascists. It was one of the handicaps of all the early weeks of the war that the Republicans had weakened the Army to such an extent that often a whole regiment was only two hundred men strong.

For the first time there had been an air raid, and fugitives on the road miles from the town told me that over a score had been killed and that the Red Madrid 'planes were coming back again in an hour or so. I paid little attention to this as I knew from long experience how invariably inaccurate is information given by refugees,

but in the town I found traces of damage. One of the staff of Colonel Garcia Escamez, who was in command of the column, told me that one woman had been killed and two injured. The bombs, he said, were small and clumsy affairs. Half an hour later I found out that this was true, for the Red 'planes, three in number, came back and dropped about a score of light bombs into the mass of motor traffic congesting the streets, but again doing very little real damage. I sat down in the middle of the little park so as to be away from possible splinters and falling brickwork, and found more alarming than the bombs the volleys being fired by the excited volunteers. The machine-guns mounted on lorries joined in the concert, while also a makeshift anti-aircraft gun sent a few shells whizzing into the air. It made a great noise, and whether because of this gun, or whether because they had dropped all their bombs, the Red 'planes made off. From Soria, using my motor-car courier service, I was able to send off another dispatch before moving on to the Somosierra pass in the Guadarrama, which I learnt was to be attacked by one of the Nationalist columns now being concentrated. It was also necessary to leave Soria, for there was no food available and I had in my hurry forgotten to look after my own private commissariat. Antoine had scouted round and found two small and rather stale rolls with a piece of raw ham, but could get nothing else.

We hurried off on another long stretch of road through the Sierras from Soria to Aranda de Duero, to strike the main Madrid-Irun road. Along that road to Somosierra Pass, through which Napoleon's Polish Lancers had once cut their way, I knew there had already been fighting, and the pass itself was still in the hands of the Reds. General Mola's orders, given that day at Burgos, had been that

all the passes were to be captured at no matter what cost. It was essential for the Nationalists to bolt and bar the doors to Madrid.

On the other side of the mountains, rolling up from Madrid, were similar columns of motor traction made up of commercial lorries and country omnibuses, bringing the Red militia to the attack. They were under the command of Colonel Mangada, who was to be the Red leader in the whole of this Madrid district for many months. He and his troops have been responsible for the torturing and murdering of thousands of innocent non-combatants, both in these mountain villages and farther south along the Tagus valley in the direction of Badajoz. So brutal and so systematic were the murders, so complete were the burnings of churches and convents, that it was perfectly evident that it could only be the result of a carefully thought-out policy, consistently imposed. The massacres and crimes, the traces and evidence of which for so many months I was to find in the whole area covered by the advance to Madrid, were not only the result of an explosion of revolutionary hatred. They were also part of a political plan imposed by Moscow. Soil the hands of as many as possible of your adherents in blood. Madden them in any way you like—by alcohol, by incendiary speeches, by lust or envy—and force them to commit crimes which are indescribable in their horror. Once the tale of murder, rape, and arson has been inscribed those men are Red revolutionaries for ever: they cannot desert; they cannot surrender, for they cannot plead for mercy. They have placed themselves outside the pale of humanity, and therefore they are fit tools for a Communist régime inspired from Moscow. That was the work of Madrid during all the first weeks of the movement.

A column of dust showed me where the troops were moving, and as we crossed a little stream round which clustered half a dozen houses, I could see straight ahead of me the famous pass outlined in the evening sky. Pressing forward to the front I found that the column had halted and an advance guard with machine-guns had been thrown out a couple of thousand yards ahead. Two light field guns still mounted on their eight-wheel lorries were trained on the brow of the mountains. On the road, hugging the right, the lorries and gay-coloured motor omnibuses were halted, with barely four yards' interval between them. I looked at the scene, some two hundred vehicles on a winding up-gradient packed so closely together, and wondered what would happen if the Reds attempted to attack downhill. They did not, and so the somewhat daring formation was justified. In fact, throughout the Civil War I have seen the Nationalist leaders take risks which seemed appalling, but I have never seen the Reds take advantage of them.

I had presented myself to the major in command of the advance guard of the column and had found talking to him some other journalists, including M. Bertrand de Jouvenel, a young Frenchman whose name is well known in France as much through his writings as because he is son of the late Senator de Jouvenel, recently minister and at one time French Resident-General in Syria and Ambassador in Rome. Night was falling fast and, seated on a box in front of my car, which I had taken back a hundred yards or so to the rear, I wrote a hurried dispatch and decided to send it back to France by Antoine, who was, incidentally, thoroughly disgusted at the idea of missing the fight which was due on the morrow. Heartened by a glass of wine at the cross-road inn, I walked back through

the gathering darkness to where young de Jouvenel had stayed just behind the outposts, and buttoning up our coats, for it was growing chilly—we were at an altitude of nearly 3,600 feet—we sat down on the road bank to watch for coming events. Night had now completely fallen; ahead we could distinctly hear the outposts whispering—they were not yet fully trained men and did not realise how far the voice carries. Every now and then a signal lamp flickered uneasily, and a telegraphist in a little hollow off the road wrote down a message. Behind in the valley, through which the little stream flows, I can just see the glow of camp fires, while every now and then the whinny of a horse from the cavalry lines comes up with the night wind.

Suddenly high up in the pass, where the road goes under a tunnel in the rock, there is a great flash of light. A Red motor-lorry has come over the sky-line, and we can see its twin headlights. The machine-guns on either side of me begin to chatter, but really the range is too great, and only spent bullets could reach the top of the pass. More effective, one of the field guns takes up the challenge, and half a dozen shells go roaring towards the mouth of the pass. The flashes light up the night, then the two headlights disappear as suddenly as they came, and after a desultory shot or so all is silent.

Falangist and Royalist militiamen were seated next to us, and they told us, while away the night hours with their conversation, how when they found that it was hopeless to try to rise in Madrid itself, they had fought their way out and along the main road. Without liaison with the Nationalist leaders or the Army, they knew instinctively that the Somosierra pass was a key position, and, reaching it three days previously, they had tried to

hold it against the onslaught of Mangada's Red advance guards.

The leader of the little group of feverish-eyed survivors who sat round me in their tattered blue uniforms—mechanics' overalls—asked me on no account to mention his name as his wife and family were still in Madrid. I have never met him since, and it is likely that he has met with a soldier's fate. And his family and children, where are they now? How often have these terrible questions to be put in a civil war! "Only ten of us had rifles," he told me, "and the rest were armed with automatic pistols or hand grenades which we made ourselves with dynamite we took from a marble quarry. We started from Madrid a hundred strong. Last night we still held the pass but we were only twenty in number. Our chief, Captain Carlos Miralles, the famous Royalist leader, was killed in the last onslaught and with no cartridges left we had to evacuate our position, carrying the body of our leader with us. We met Colonel Escamez's column this morning and now that our pouches are full of cartridges we have demanded the honour to lead the advance in the morning as we know the way."

It was then long past midnight, and with my two companions I thought it time to snatch as much sleep as the wretched mosquitoes, which I was surprised to find at such an altitude, would consent to give. We slumbered uneasily, but we did sleep, and therefore did not notice that the unit with which we had had friendly contact had side-slipped to the right and that fresh troops had been moved up to take their place. This was unfortunate, as the result proved.

Hearing a car dash up the road, young de Jouvenel, who confessed that his military knowledge was not of the best,



exclaimed: "That must be General Mola." I expostulated with him on the improbability of the general in command of the army inspecting outposts, but he insisted that he had recognised the General's car and ran up the road. We met a cloaked and sleepy-looking officer who asked us who we were and where we were going, and it was then we found that he was not our friendly grey-haired major, not his chubby-cheeked and charming captain; in fact, not anybody we knew or had seen before. Things then moved rapidly. We suddenly found ourselves standing in a ring of men, their rifles pointed at us and their fingers twitching on the triggers. We were roughly told to put up our hands and were still more roughly searched for arms. We were flagrantly in the wrong: it was folly to be in an outpost position and not to be personally known to the officers in command. Finally, after a lot of talk de Jouvenel was allowed to lower his hands and to pull out the personal pass he had, signed by General Mola. That certainly saved us from being shot on the spot as spies, but it was not sufficient. "How do we know that the pass is not forged?" the major asked me sternly, and I could find no better reply than to show him mine and to mention the names of the officers we had been talking to. "That's all very well," was his reply, "but you have no right to be in my lines. I don't know you and I will have to send you back to the guard-room of the picket where the colonel will decide what to do with you. I only hope for your sakes that your story is correct."

And so with three men who to us in the darkness appeared extremely ferocious we started to march back down the hill. Bertrand de Jouvenel was furious, though not perturbed, and started off down the hill at a terrific

rate. I followed him and whispered a word of warning: "Don't go so fast or our guards might think we are trying to get away."

But our guards were apparently just as keen as we were to get the walk over, for when we slackened our speed they made signs and shouted, "Tire, tire." If it had been French it would have sounded alarming, as it would have meant "Shoot, shoot." But in Spanish it only means "Move on," and so after a second's startled reflection we mended our pace.

We were not received with open arms in the guard-room, as there was little space and only two deck-chairs, which de Jouvenel and myself promptly occupied despite the protests of the corporal of the guard, who before our arrival had been fast asleep. As compensation for being robbed of his more comfortable berth he kept loading and unloading his revolver, with pointed hints, which we thought out of place, as to what would happen to us at dawn. But we were not left long in doubt, for an amiable young cavalry lieutenant came along, and after inspecting our papers said that they were evidently quite in order, but that nevertheless he would have to send us back to Burgos under escort.

When dawn came the sound of heavy guns awoke us, and we all—prisoners and guards alike—dashed out and climbed to the road bank to watch our first fight. There were two batteries of four-inch guns in position; every minute or so they would fire, and with our glasses we could see the shells bursting against the grey granite walls of the pass. I passed my glasses to the friendly lieutenant for him to look at the scene, and he shouted "They are falling back." He was referring to a battalion of Reds which during the night had been pushed out on both

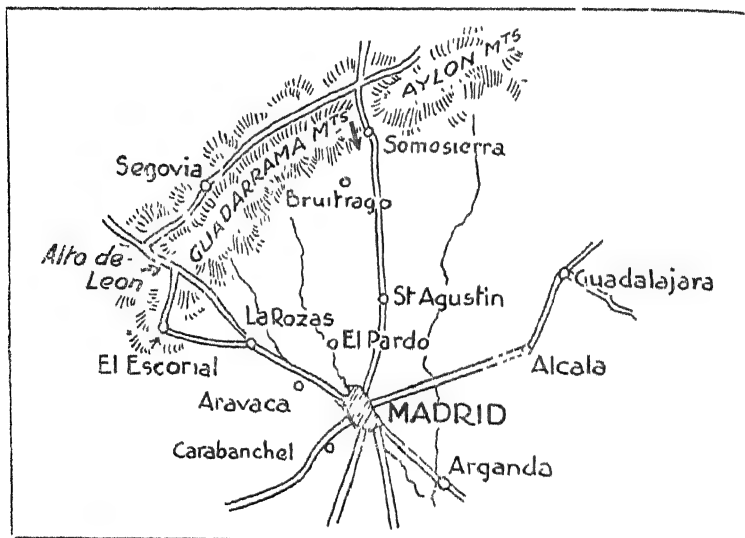
sides of the pass. Looking in my turn, I could see the men getting up and running back to the pass, while shells burst among them and little clouds of dust showed where our machine-gun barrage was at work. It was a slight affair. Fifty rounds of shells, a few machine-gun bands, and the whole of the Nationalist advance guard was pouring forward. A quarter of an hour later, as, deprecatingly, our young lieutenant showed us a motor-bus which was taking a fatigue party back to Aranda de Duero, and suggested that we had better get in and start our journey back to Burgos, a motor dispatch-rider came up with the news that the pass had been captured and that the Reds were retreating to Buitrago in the low ground on the opposite side. The line was not to move forward here, as in nearly all the other Guadarrama passes, more than a few hundred yards or so during all the weary autumn and winter months, and not until the general march on Madrid was almost concluded.

I was furious at this contretemps of being sent back under arrest to General Mola's headquarters, as I knew that I would miss my rendezvous with Antoine and my French car, and I wondered what he would do without any proper passes in the middle of Spain. I knew also that there was fighting to be done for the other passes, and I was afraid of being late with the news. At Aranda, which we reached feeling very tired, cross, and dirty, we found our young cavalry friend, who had also turned up in a surprising fashion, and I realised that though so amicable he had not completely accepted our story at its face value, and that we were under his special surveillance besides having an armed Falangist guard.

Finally, things turned out quite well. With the officer's aid, I was able to secure a dilapidated but fast-travelling

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taxicab in Aranda, and we shot off to Burgos at better speed, to find General Mola half apologetic and half scolding. I thanked him for his excuses, admitted his reasons for scolding us, and asked eagerly that his staff should give us news of what was happening. Before doing this, however, he solemnly dismissed our guard.



SKETCH MAP SHOWING POSITION OF THE ALTO DE LEON PASS

I then heard the story, one of the epics of the Civil War, of the capture of the Guadarrama pass, also known as that of the Alto de Leon, by General Serrador. In later days I got to know this officer well and saw him several times at his divisional headquarters at Villacastin in the old country house of Federico Madrazo, a well-known Spanish painter. Sturdy in build, with a flourishing iron-grey moustache and a weather-tanned face, he is a typical Spanish officer. Strongly Nationalist in his views, he was one of that little band of political prisoners exiled to Villa

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Cisneros in Spanish West Africa, who took the heroic resolution to escape, and who managed to make their way to Lisbon in a tiny lobster boat, with scanty provisions and hardly any water. He was prominent in the secret staff work which preceded the military rising, and was given the command of the column of infantry and militia which was to capture this pass and prevent the Reds under Mangada from advancing along the roads to Avila and Burgos and, especially, along the Corunna road, which is the key to the heart of Old Castile.

Moving off with eight hundred lorries and motor vehicles, carrying a hastily mobilised force of artillery and infantry, he fought his way past the Red advance posts outside Villacastin and at the little town of Venta San Rafael, at the foot of the pass where the road crosses the mountain range, past the pedestal with the Lion of the Kingdom of Leon, at an altitude of 4,500 feet.

The Reds were stationed in force at the top of the mountain, with artillery and machine-guns, and from Venta San Rafael the road winds up and up in a series of hairpin turns. General Serrador decided that the only tactics to adopt were rush tactics, and that were he to disembark his men and send them up the mountain road on foot, they would never get there. So, echeloning his motor-lorries while he sent cavalry from the historic Farnese Regiment to make a detour and guard his flanks, he rushed his motor transport up the road. Shells and machine-gun fire began to rain down. The General himself drove in an open car, so that he could effectively command the whole column. Lorry after lorry was put out of action and men killed and wounded. Those who were uninjured were ordered to pile into the nearest moving vehicle, to hang on somehow or other, but to keep going. And those

untrained volunteers, fired by their patriotism and fervour, kept going. By the time the lorries reached the point where it had been settled they were to stop, more than half had been put out of action. But General Serrador and his staff were at their head, and now on foot and in open order they all started scrambling up the rocks and through the pine trees to the little rocky plateau which marks the head of the pass. I visited the spot only a few days later, when the dead bodies of Reds and Patriots alike were still strewn everywhere, and when the wrecked and burnt-out skeletons of motor omnibuses and lorries littered the sides of the road.

It was almost impossible to believe the evidence before one's eyes that these men had managed to storm such heights in the face of the enemy fire. But they did so, and when, with bayonets fixed, the first breathless platoons arrived at the top, with their grey-headed general in the front rank, the Reds broke and ran in confusion down the hill-side on to the first slopes of the plateau stretching to Madrid. Another door through which the Reds had hoped to pour had been banged and bolted. It remained, however, a very unhealthy spot, for the Reds, with vain hopes of winning back the height they had been unable to keep, pestered its garrison with artillery fire and daily aeroplane bombing.

When I visited the pass with a number of journalists conducted by Captain Aguilera, our Press officer, the Reds were just trying to capture Venta San Rafael at the foot of the pass by a twin turning movement on both flanks calculated to cut off the gallant garrison on the hill. We watched the fight from the village for some time, seeing the prisoners being brought in—roughly sixty or so—and then with our officer guide pushed to the top. From

there we were able to see Madrid gleaming white in the distance. Machine-gun bullets were cutting the brush-wood about us, and just when we were starting back for our cars, left on one of the bends of the road below, the Red 'planes arrived and we had to take shelter as they dropped bomb after bomb. Finally we ran to our cars and got off, and then two of them followed us with their machine-guns, flying very low and shooting down the road. I tried at first to dash ahead, thinking that after the first burst of machine-gun fire they would give up the chase.

I had with me in my car a very gallant little American girl, Miss Frances Davis, who was acting as courier and correspondent for the *Daily Mail*. She showed no fear, not even when I told Antoine, the chauffeur, to jam on the brakes and stop, at a moment when we were travelling at some sixty miles an hour. The car side-slipped across the road, the cushions slid from their places, and two bottles of beer rolled from a basket, pouring their contents over us as we opened the doors and, jumping out, took shelter in the fields on the right of the road. One of the Red 'planes, a small one of the Moth type, was then only some three hundred feet up, but it could not fire through the propeller and had to side-slip on one wing every time it tried to get its machine-gun to bear. It did so twice again as we stood in the field motionless and hidden from view in the shadow of rocks, and then, giving up the chase as a bad job, it flew off. We had further emotions, however, for when we reached Villacastin, some miles in the rear, the Red 'planes returned and bombed us soundly again. We were lucky not to be touched, but there were over a score of casualties among the soldiers. Miss Davis behaved with exemplary coolness, taking it all for granted,

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and when she got back to the frontier she was able to write a brilliant dispatch relating her experiences.

Before this visit to the Guadarrama pass I had made a very long detour eastwards to approach Madrid from the north-east along the Saragossa road. At Burgos I had heard that the Reds were boasting they would capture Saragossa within a day or so and would open up direct rail and road communication between Barcelona and Madrid. I knew by then that the central and western passes had been closed, and if the road north-east were also to be blocked it would mean that the Reds had lost their chance of overrunning the Nationalist territory and reaching General Mola's capital at Burgos, their final objective, if they were still hoping to suppress the movement by force of arms.

The journey to Saragossa was long and uneventful. Antoine and myself were by now accustomed to being stopped by Civil Guards and armed peasants with the national colours of red and gold either pinned to their coats or worn as an armlet, and with my pass from Burgos we were seldom long delayed. At Saragossa I found at the hotel an American professor and his wife who were scared out of their wits, and was able to reassure them and to give them good advice as to how they could get out of the country by going to Pampeluna. In the villages round Saragossa I had noticed a number of surly faces, and it was evident that some Reds at least were to be found behind the lines. I was told afterwards that most of them made off under cover of darkness, and that the others, seeing that the Nationalists were winning, came over heart and soul to the Patriot side. At Saragossa they were extremely optimistic, and I was given a pass taking me to Guadalajara. I did not get there, as the place was



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still in the hands of the Reds, but I had plenty of adventure on the way. We were by this time a small caravan, as I had been joined again by M. de Jouvenel and also by two American correspondents. We were told we had been preceded just twenty-four hours before by a mobile column which had for its task to secure the road and bar the way to any Red advance from Madrid. We found traces of the movements of this column all along the road. The Reds had in places tried to hold up its progress by shooting from the houses, but the Nationalists had stormed their way through, hardly stopping an hour anywhere.

Night was falling when we passed through Ateca, and as many of the villagers appeared as sullen as some of those near Saragossa, I decided that we had better stop at the next place which offered us good accommodation for the night. The other members of the little caravan agreed to throw in their lot with me and to rely on my experience of Spain in time of trouble, and so when we reached Alhama de Aragon we ordered our chauffeurs to draw up at the best hotel. We were favoured by luck, for none of us knew the road and its possibilities. Alhama is a well-known watering place with sulphur and other medicinal baths and a fine hotel. All of us enjoyed a hot bath—the first for many days—and then we sat down to a dinner served on white linen by a waiter in full uniform. It was a welcome surprise.

I had another surprise an hour later as the waiter brought me a card asking if I would take coffee with a Monsieur M. Martin, a professor of Spanish in Paris whom I had often met and who said he was travelling with an English doctor. I found them in complete ignorance of what was taking place, my fellow-countryman was especially pleased with the bundle of different English

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papers I was able to give him, and also with the advice I proffered as to their best way to return to France. The doctor had wished to be back in London several days before, for urgent personal reasons, but had not felt it safe to venture out in a countryside when he did not know what had taken place. I told the little party—they were four in number—that they could travel quite safely by day at least, to Saragossa, and that there they could go either to Pampeluna or to Canfranc on the Franco-Spanish frontier by train.

After another wonderful bath next morning we all started out again down the Guadalajara road. Watching our maps closely, our cars shot on past Arcos and the curious round hill of Medinaceli with its old castle walls, when we suddenly found a barricade of neatly felled trees across the road. It looked a dangerous spot, and so we turned back to the nearest cross-roads where a sentry post told us that the local commander was on top of the hill. We had just reached the plateau and the Parador, or small local hotel, and presented ourselves to the major in command, when there was a jangling of church bells, and before we knew what had happened that officer and his staff bundled us back into our cars, and with a soldier standing on the footboard and ourselves half in and half out, we shot along the tiny cobbled village street under the archway of the castle.

Red 'planes again. We stood in a small stone corridor sheltered by the twelve-foot thick masonry of the old castle of the Dukes of Medinaceli, while we made better acquaintance with our hosts in the flickering light of a couple of tallow dips.

Major Palacios presented himself to us when we had shown our various passes and told him who we were. It

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was he who was in command of the mobile column, and he had just reached Medinaceli the night before, and with his field guns, mortars and machine-guns had beaten off the Reds and had destroyed finally all hopes they had of reaching Saragossa and linking up Madrid with Barcelona. They had felt certain of success and, not knowing there was a column advancing to meet them, had sent ahead three motor-cars filled with Red agitators who were to purchase the adherence of any disaffected men in the Saragossa garrison and start a rising. Their cars were filled with dynamite and automatic pistols as well as with a quantity of Red literature.

There were several air raids that morning, and in the intervals, seated in the only café the little medieval town possessed, we all wrote our dispatches. I was fated to remain at Medinaceli for four days, as my car, which had gone out with my telegrams, was held up somehow, Antoine for once having failed to obtain a return pass. During that time I got to know our gallant host Major Palacios and his staff very well, and also to realise the generous hospitality of the Spanish soldier. We shared their food and we shared their hard couches on the stone flags of the castle or the floor of the smoky little café. We were able to buy shepherds' blankets, warm and enveloping, so we were not so much to be pitied. The one thing I found difficult to get used to was the amount of oil and garlic in every dish.

Major Palacios told me how he had been in Madrid when the movement began, and though on the reserve list, immediately started for his garrison town of Saragossa. "At Guadalajara," he said, "the train stopped, and when I went along to find out what had happened, I was told that a general strike had been proclaimed and that the train

would go no farther I saw that the signals were in our favour and that the driver and stoker were still in the engine cab, so I pulled myself up next to them, and taking my revolver from my pocket—I was in mufti at the time—I shoved it in the small of the driver's back and told him and the stoker not to say a word unless they wished to be shot, but to open the regulator and move off as fast as possible. Both men did what they were told. The Red militia saw us going, and at first did not know what had happened. We were getting up speed every minute as they ran alongside the train waving their rifles. One man armed with an automatic climbed on to the foot-plate, but I kicked him under the jaw and he fell with a thud on to the platform. When we got to Calatayud I asked the driver and stoker if they were willing to drive on without further threats, and they both said they were not Reds at heart and were willing to throw in their lot with us. When I got to Saragossa, I was told that it would be my task to hold the Guadalajara road, and as soon as I could get my column together, I came down to this point where I knew I could hold the road against anything up to ten thousand men."

I went out on several raids and reconnoitring parties that Major Palacios had organised, but as I saw that he held all the countryside I felt it necessary to get back speedily to the centre of things.

With a special pass and plenty of good wishes in the shape of the Spanish farewell, "Va usted con Dios," I left and, by the old familiar game of "lorry-jumping," which everybody learnt during the Great War, I managed to reach Soria and then got a car back to Burgos. I had made a point of always travelling light, and had nothing with me except my typewriter and a small case in which

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I packed, besides my paper and maps, a couple of pairs of heavy socks, a clean shirt, razor, comb, soap and toothbrush. All my other belongings were scattered here and there about the country, and many of them will always remain so, as it would hardly be economic to tour hundreds of miles of small villages to pick up here a pullover and there a pair of flannel bags or a spare pair of shoes.

### III

## THE MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTH

BADAJOS, AUGUST 14

GENERAL FRANCO, neglecting the minor fronts scattered here and there in the sierras of Andalusia and the Estremadura, had been concentrating during these days on his part of the task that lay before the Nationalist leaders, namely, assembling his expeditionary force from Africa and marching up the Guadiana valley to turn half right at Cáceres and then along the Tagus valley towards Toledo and Madrid. It was the passage of invaders since all time, as the mountains which rise between Seville and Toledo, on the direct road as the crow flies, prohibit military activity

Naturally, I, at that time, had only a clouded perception of what was taking place, but as I had obtained a good view of the situation in the north it seemed to me that my next best move would be southwards to see what General Franco's army was doing. I had found General Mola's patriot forces with their trained officers and their national fervour superior to the Reds. It seemed to me that in the long run, given a fair share of luck, good leadership, and the spirit of confidence which animated the troops from Navarre, the forces of law and order should defeat those of revolution coupled with crime. It was my duty to form an opinion as to the ultimate outcome of the war, which, through the columns of the *Daily Mail*, should be made known to the British public. But I felt reluctant to make any definite statement until I knew what was

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going on in the south of Spain, and so I asked for passes which would enable me to go to Seville and see General Queipo de Llano in command there.

General Mola immediately acceded to my request, and it was with a special pass from him that I started on my eight-hundred-mile dash south. It was necessary to travel by way of Lisbon, as Red forces still held Merida and Badajoz—they were to be driven out a few days later, and I was lucky enough to be back in time to see the fighting which thus linked up the southern and northern Patriot armies. The first few days of August 1936 were phenomenally hot, and my journey was extremely tiring. I had started from Salamanca about nine in the morning, and when I got to Ciudad Rodrigo and the frontier I realised that there had been little improvement since the days of Wellington in the roads from the Portuguese frontier to the Atlantic coast. In parts they were hardly better than cart tracks, and it was often impossible to go faster than fifteen miles an hour, and that at the cost of terrible bumping. After Coimbra the road got much better and became a good motor road. It was cooler at nightfall and, though it was getting very late and we had covered a considerable distance, with the agreement of Antoine, I determined to make Lisbon before stopping for the night.

It was a picturesque moonlit night, and the road which took us through the famous lines of Torres Vedras had just sufficient twists and climbs not to be monotonous. There were, outside the villages, girls dancing by the roadside. They danced alone, tall and graceful in their long clinging frocks and their gay-coloured head scarves. Straight-backed and lissom, carrying their heads like princesses, it was a fairy scene. All we could guess of

their swains was a low crooning accompanied by a rhythmic beating of the hands which showed that the young men had to be content with the role of a very subdued orchestra

Lisbon is an entrancing city, but I arrived only just in time to eat a hurried supper in a night café with Antoine, write a note to my friend of the Eastern Telegraph to warn him that I would be sending him a long dispatch to transmit to London, and then to bed in view of an early start. We took the first ferry boat in the morning and then set off on the long journey to the mouth of the Guadiana river in the distant south. The sun beat down on us with tropical intensity, and the car was not running at its best. At four o'clock in the afternoon we reached Villa Real de San Antonio on the Gulf of Cadiz, where the white sands of the shore were dotted here and there with bathing cabins, and where white-walled villas with green shutters closely fastened stood in the tamarisks just a bare fifty yards from the rollers of the Atlantic.

The Guadiana here is very broad, and when the tide rises there is a decided rip in the current. There is no regular ferry, and my car was run on a flat-bottomed barge over two planks placed broadwise, and there, with front wheels and back wheels projecting on either side, it was precariously secured by ropes. The barge was to be tugged across by a small motor-boat. I took my place in this latter, but Antoine, who was not at all reassured as to the fate of the car, insisted on going in the barge. I asked him whether he meant to plunge in and drag the car ashore if there was an accident, but he did not see the joke and merely replied, "My place is with my car" We had no accident and were soon ashore, and after the usual protracted Customs formalities started off again on the Huelva-Seville road.



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Everywhere there were signs of recent fighting, and in the villages and towns the burnt churches and sacked houses showed that the Reds had passed there, and had been defeated only after they had taken their usual toll of lives and had committed their customary crimes. In each village now, however, there were Civil Guards and Fascist volunteers, and, again at each cross-roads, I had to stop and show my credentials. It was even hotter than it had been on the road in Portugal, and each time we had to overtake a column of military lorries we were almost blinded by the dense clouds of white dust.

Finally, the towers and spires of Seville showed rose-coloured in the evening sky, and my long journey was over.

General Queipo de Llano received me the moment I presented my credentials and, with that complete frankness which by now I was accustomed to expect, he told me the tale of the early days of the rising in Seville which I have already related. The General was wearing a restful mufti suit of white tussore—the usual wear of a Spanish gentleman in the south. There were two things that he said which struck me most, for they were proffered without hesitation, and at that time they answered two very important questions. The first was as follows: “I am not in this movement for any motive of personal ambition. I will maintain myself in the south, and I accept with willing discipline the fact that the government of the country as a whole has been put in the hands of Generals Franco and Mola, both of whom are men I admire. I well remember that more than ten years ago the French Marshal Lyautey told me there were two soldiers who would make the world resound with their names. The first was General Graziani and the second was General Franco.”

His second statement was to define the Nationalist attitude to the captured Red militiamen. "Except in the heat of battle or in the capture by assault of a position," he said, "no men are shot down without being given a hearing and a fair trial in strict accordance with the rule of procedure of our military courts. I never bring any pressure to bear on the officers who compose these courts martial in one way or another. The trials are held in public, and those only are condemned to death who have personally taken part in murders and other crimes punishable according to our military code by death, or who by their position of authority are responsible for having allowed such crimes to be committed. I have taken thousands of prisoners, and to-day more than half of them are at liberty."

General Queipo de Llano had already adopted his custom of making a nightly broadcast speech to the Spanish people, and there is no doubt but that his cheerful optimism, his bluff military manner, and his typical Spanish humour—sometimes somewhat broad, but understood by peasant and town worker alike—had an enormous influence in these very early days of the movement. I saw him that night making his speech, poking fun at the Red leaders and ridiculing their statements. He sat on the arm of his chair in his office, with his staff standing near him, and spoke with only the aid of a few notes. Occasionally he would stop for a moment and question one of his officers for the confirmation of a figure or a name, and there was no doubt that he had adopted quite unconsciously the best broadcasting technique.

I was given confidentially figures as to the strength of the African expeditionary force which was already moving northwards on the long road to Madrid, its

regiments, its guns, and its objectives. I was enabled to see some of the battalions, the finest units in the Spanish Army, and so, when I sat down after a hurried forty-eight hours of inspection and of conferences with staff officers, I had made up my mind that, humanly speaking, there was no doubt but that General Franco and the Nationalists would sooner or later defeat the Madrid Reds. I have a slight personal knowledge of military affairs, and I saw that Franco had fighting for him men who were disciplined and who had an ideal. His African troops were not only well in hand, but they possessed a very high level of fighting ability. The volunteer militia units were, naturally, not so well trained, but their keenness was such that it was evident they would gain those other military qualities in the course of the campaign. At that moment the Russian and other international Red brigades had not been constituted; they were only being talked about vaguely. It was already obvious, however, that when they did appear on the field, they could only delay the ultimate victory of the Nationalists and could not change the final issue.

It was in this month of August that Spain's National army was being formed. Young men were marching to exercise, were standing at the rifle butts or were kneeling round a machine-gun, all over Nationalist Spain. Some of them in khaki with a khaki forage cap with green or scarlet tassel hanging over the forehead—these were men belonging to the classes of conscripts being called up, three in August and two later in December. These conscripts were just 200,000 in number, and they were to form the solid flesh of the skeleton Regular Army which was all that had been left after five years of republic.

Their discipline was severe, their training hard, and they

turned out to be very fine soldiers. Companies from the Regiment of America—a name which is a romantic reminder of the spacious days when Spain held sway over three-quarters of a continent in the New World—were equal in valour to the famous Spanish foot of the sixteenth century. They had no peers in close hand-to-hand fighting, when it is a case of each man for himself.

Despite this, my favourites were always the volunteer battalions—the young men of the Requetes or the Falangists. The first, so gay and dashing with their scarlet *bornas*, or berets, rather like the tam-o'-shanter but without the tassel, worn hanging down over the right ear, their khaki shirts, wide open on the chest, their buff equipment, and their white socks neatly rolled round the ankle over their *espargatas*, or cord-soled shoes. The second, in their blue uniforms, looked so workman-like, and how they sang their Falangist hymn as they marched! There was much work in those early days, but also much singing, and “Oriamendi” for the Requetes, the Falangist hymn, and the “Novio de la Muerte” for the Spanish Legion, could be heard over the tramp of feet and the roar of the motor traffic on every road and in every town square of Nationalist Spain.

The Requetes must have put in the field, mainly in the north as I have already said, something like 100,000 men, nearly all of whom were used for active military purposes. The Falangists had perhaps double that number, but many of their units were used on lines of communication and for garrison purposes. Many also were kept in Majorca to protect that island from further menace and also to act themselves as a perpetual threat to Barcelona.

None of these troops were completely trained, and yet most of them had to be used in the front line as necessity

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dictated. It was when they were "resting" out of the line that they got their military training, and many a time have I heard the exclamations of delight from a company of Requetes, informed when it "came out" that two machine-guns were waiting for it. This meant a welcome addition to the strength of the company, and also something delightfully new to learn. For that was the spirit of the Spanish volunteer in 1936.

The ready supply of volunteers, 300,000 in all, within the first few months of the war, was the best proof that the Army movement was really a national one. With the Regular Army that meant some 500,000 young men under arms in Nationalist territory, which had a population of some twelve millions.

All these considerations, carefully weighed and checked with all the private information which was at my disposal, not only as regards the strength of the Patriots and the powerful material which they would shortly possess, but as regards the weakness and disorder among the Reds, enabled me to send a lengthy article to be published in the *Daily Mail* on August 10 giving it as my firm opinion that the victory of General Franco was certain. Never at any moment during the protracted winter campaign which followed, nor during the period of hesitancy and uncertainty in the early spring, did I feel any doubt as to the accuracy of my statements. Set-back, I knew, there must be. You cannot wage war without an enemy, and if you have an enemy he must occasionally pull something off.

The Reds, by building up new corps of international volunteers, many of whom were experienced soldiers, might make the issue more costly and the progress of the Nationalists slower, but I knew that they could never hold up the march of the Nationalist regiments for longer than

a few months on each successive position, and that their ultimate fate was to be destroyed or driven into the sea. Besides, it was clear that both sides could have foreign volunteers, and in this rivalry it was not certain that the Reds would come off best.

Engine trouble made my return journey to Burgos long and tiring. In the thousands of miles that I have travelled so far—by the end of December it was nearly 20,000 miles—it was only on this single occasion that my car was held up by engine failure, and for this I have to thank my two chauffeurs, the Frenchman Antoine and his Spanish successor Juan. The care they took of tyres, car, and engine, working at them often until late in the night after a full day of hard driving, was most praiseworthy, but I must also say that both of them entered into the spirit of my mission and were on every occasion out to do their best and help me whenever possible to beat my rivals. But if they took care of my cars, they could not avoid accidents—most of them due to the reckless driving of the big supply lorries, and for weeks on end after some more than particularly bad accident I would suffer from car nerves. I felt that I could never sleep in the car, and any sudden application of the brakes would make me jump. But it must be remembered that car driving in Spain in time of civil war is not a restful operation.

In the Basque country, speeding towards Vitoria one Sunday night just after dusk, coming over a hogsback I saw to my horror four men zigzagging along the middle of the road. My chauffeur had his lights on and had sounded his hooter, but three of them went to the left of the road while the fourth stayed right in our track. We were travelling at about sixty miles an hour and there was no time for reflection. My chauffeur went right into

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the ditch, with his brakes screaming, and then the man ran into us, hitting the fast-travelling car on the right-hand angle-bracket of the wind-screen. There was a hideous, hollow crash and he fell in a heap. When the car stopped, I raced back, but the man was dead. What followed was like a nightmare. Villagers rushed up from all over the place, and there were shouts of despair which quickly changed into menaces for us. Sticks were raised and fists clenched and my French chauffeur and myself were in an ugly fix until the village guards with shotguns turned up to arrest us. They made us put up our hands, roughly searched us, and then marched us off to the village lock-up. Our car, which had suffered badly—all the right wing and running board having been torn off where we had lumbered through the ditch—was brought along behind us by a village youth.

I asked loudly for the presence of the Civil Guard, who, I knew, were alone capable of dealing with the situation, while outside the villagers shouted for vengeance against the foreigners who had killed one of theirs. Fortunately, good deeds have their own reward, and there turned up the *alcalde* or mayor of the village who happened to be a man I had picked up on the road the week before and taken as far as Pampeluna, where he had business. He recognised me and took the whole affair in hand. Half an hour later the Civil Guard appeared and the shouting crowd was sent at once to the right-about. I called for witnesses, but the sergeant, a tall man with a long, fair moustache, said, "Let us look at the road first. If the accident took place as you say, it will be clearly marked and we will have no need for witnesses." We all got into my car, and this time my chauffeur, reassured, drove us back to the spot. Our brake marks and the point where

we had swerved into the ditch were visible, and on our car the place where the man hit it could also be seen. The local doctor, who was on the road, vouched for the fact that our lights were on and that we had hooted, and the whole case was over. We went back to the village hall, where the sergeant said, "It was not your fault, the poor man killed himself." The village priest was sent for to draw up an account of what had taken place, which was couched in perfectly fair language, and once we had signed it we were at liberty to proceed.

This incident heightened my existing admiration for the Spanish Civil Guard, who are a loyal and well-disciplined body of men. The accident did not tend to relieve the intense strain of fatigue I felt owing to my long and fast car journeys, and this became worse a month later when, approaching Valladolid in rainy weather, we were unable to keep to the road at a curve and went for a quadruple toss in a ploughed field. Fortunately, the car was modern, with a reinforced steel body, and though it slid on its roof, turning over twice longways before it turned over twice sideways, it stood up to the strain. The car was wrecked, but I had only cuts and bruises and a strained back. It might have been much worse. Peasants dragged the car back to the road, and when the battered wings were pulled up from their contact with the wheels, and when the doors were tied in position with string, we found that the engine still ticked over and that we could drive into Valladolid. Antoine was not hurt, and while I spent thirty-six hours in bed with a touch of fever, he had local fitters set to work, and I used the same damaged car for a whole month during the operations for the relief of the Alcazar at Toledo. What had done most damage to me was the fact that in the luggage container at the



back there were stored five large cans of petrol. When the car overturned, the seat moved, and all of these came through from the back and were tossed about in the car, hitting and jolting me from every side. My head must be unusually thick and hard, for though all the petrol cans were dented, I had only superficial cuts and grazes. My back, however, hurt me for a long time, and I found the marches across stubble fields approaching Toledo extremely tiring and difficult.

Throughout this period I was much beholden to an excellent and able comrade, M. Jean d'Hospital, a French journalist who helped me in all the material things of life and often volunteered out of his turn to take my telegrams back, even in the middle of the night, along the dangerous road to the telegraph office at Talavera de la Reina.

To pick up the chronological thread of my narrative, I found soon after my return from the south that General Franco's troops were making rapid progress and were just about to capture Merida and thus secure complete road liaison with General Mola's troops of the north who were in Caceres. Captain Aguilera, whom I have already mentioned, and who was often a good friend to journalists, gave me the latest news and advised me to try to be in time for the capture of Badajoz. Captain Aguilera, otherwise the Count d'Alba de Yeltis, like so many Spaniards, spoke excellent English. He and young Pablo Merry del Val and also Captain Bolin, chief of the Press office with General Franco, in the south first and afterwards at Salamanca, could have been taken anywhere for Englishmen.

Starting off again for the south I came to the walled town of Avila, so well known to the tourist. It was the

home of Saint Theresa, the famous woman doctor of the Church in the sixteenth century, and a legend has grown up round her name in the present civil war. The Red columns commanded by the notorious Mangada were advancing through the Sierra de Gredos, committing terrible atrocities in all the villages—atrocities which have been recounted to me by survivors and eyewitnesses and which have been duly related in the official documents published by the Nationalist government—and had reached a point distant only about eight miles from the city. Mangada and his staff were seated by the road consulting their maps, when a woman dressed in black was brought before them by a sergeant who said that he had taken her prisoner as she was coming along the Avila road. Mangada rudely questioned the woman, who was tall and pale-faced and about sixty years of age, her silver hair just visible beneath her close-drawn black silk mantilla. She raised her hand and said: “As you value your lives, go back. Avila is full of troops, with guns and other great instruments of war, and they are preparing to sally forth and destroy you.”

Mangada was perplexed and disturbed at this statement and decided to fall back on Cebreros, some fifteen miles in the rear, and there await further information before marching to the assault. He was never able to advance a yard, and was ultimately driven back when the Nationalist offensive began. But he learnt that Avila had been empty of troops at the time, and when he asked for the woman prisoner to be brought before him to answer for this he was told that she had disappeared. Many Red prisoners have vouched for this story being true, as I have told it, and in the Province of Avila it is claimed that the woman was no less than Saint Theresa come to save her

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city from the terrible menace of Red invasion, with its consequences of murder, rape, arson, and other crimes.

As I approached Caceres, the limits of the Northern Army, there were plenty of signs of fighting. The roads were encumbered with Red Cross cars and lorries taking men or supplies to the front line. General Franco, who had just effected his liaison at Caceres with General Mola, was striking a double blow from Caceres and Merida; he was pushing eastwards to Navalmoral de la Mata so as to capture the Tagus valley and reach the key position of Talavera de la Reina, and westward his forces were attacking Badajoz, the last Red stronghold in the whole of that part of the country.

The Reds were fighting fiercely, but as usual in a disconnected fashion owing to rivalry between officers and Committees of Public Safety, which seemed to share the command. While it was still possible to save Badajoz, the Red columns dallied at Navalmoral de la Mata, burning villages and murdering thousands of men, women, and children, and it was only when Merida had fallen, and when the assault parties of the Seventh Bandera of the Legion were blowing down the gates of Badajoz, that they made something like a concerted push with the object of cutting right through the centre of General Franco's army. In such conditions, the blank failure they met and the rout which followed were only to be expected.

Caceres is a beautiful town of churches and palaces, and it also possesses the additional charm of having an excellent hotel. But after the briefest visit to staff headquarters for my pass to be made out I started off for Merida. I knew that there was fierce fighting at two points, Merida and Navalmoral de la Mata, and I chose the first point as nearer and to my mind more important.

But I was not fated to get to Merida so easily as all that I had covered about half the distance of fifty-odd miles which separate the two towns, when there was a brisk crackle of rifle fire. At a corner of the road ahead of me was one of those small castles, composed of a massive square central tower flanked with loftier round towers at each of the four corners, which are so frequent in this part of Spain. A hundred yards farther on was a small farmhouse, and between the two there was a line of Civil Guards taking cover behind walls and hedgerows, blazing away at the crest of the hills to the east. The rattle of Nationalist machine-guns burst out, as through my glasses I could see a little line of distant figures run from one fold of the ground to another. In the fields in front of me an occasional explosion showed that the Reds had at least a couple of pieces of light artillery with them.

An officer explained to me that this was evidently a flanking party of the main Red force attacking Merida trying to get across the road. The road, as far as he knew, was not cut, but he strongly recommended that I should not attempt to take it until the next morning when a convoy with an escort would be going through. It was tantalising to realise that only twenty-five miles separated me from Merida. but as I had no desire to fall into the hands of the Reds I told my chauffeur to turn round and I drove back to a solemn eight-course dinner at the Caceres hotel. Over coffee, I was given a graphic account of how the Reds had been routed that very day at Naval-moral. News of their projected attack in great force was brought by scout 'planes. It was thus known that, besides three columns of motor-lorries carrying troops and artillery, there was an armoured train followed by a supply train. A small body of Falangist militia was rushed to

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the hills north of Navalморal with instructions not to show themselves until the armoured train had passed the station. They were then to attack straight down the railway line, holding it merely long enough for a squad of engineers to dynamite the line and prevent the train from retiring. All of them were then to withdraw in good order to the hills. At the town of Navalморal itself a thousand men, including two companies of the 27th Foot, dug themselves in and, with artillery and machine-guns, awaited the enemy attack. Everything went off according to programme; the armoured train was brought to a standstill in a cutting three hundred yards from the station, with the result that it could not use its field guns or rifles. The Red frontal attack along the road was mown down, and three heavy armoured cars were captured.

This seemed a good presage for the fighting round Merida, of which nothing so far was known, the communication by wire having been cut. The convoy which set out next morning was composed of some twenty lorries, two of which carried soldiers and the others ammunition, wine in casks, and food, some of which was alive in the shape of four screaming pigs for the white soldiers, and a number of sheep and goats for the Moors. The commander of the convoy opened the way in a torpedo sports car and I was told to place my car in the middle. One lorry with soldiers brought up the rear. And so we started off in an immense cloud of white dust and, bowling along at about thirty-five miles an hour, we passed the point where I had been held up, and in an hour and a half we reached the bridge leading to Merida. Then there came shouts from the head of the column which by then had closed up, and I saw soldiers and drivers jumping from their lorries and scattering in every

direction. Antoine had brought our car to a standstill at the moment that the brakes screamed along the column, and he looked right and left for a chance to back and turn.

For a period of time which seemed to me like minutes but which could not have been more than half a second or so, I thought that the fight of the day before, of which we had had no news, had gone the wrong way and that the Reds were in the old red-tiled town straight ahead of us. It was a possibility and, as I knew that we could not turn the car on that narrow bridge, I expected machine-gun fire at close range any instant and gloomily reflected on the fact that with the very best of luck we were fifty miles from Caceres, which meant a weary two days' trudge along the hills. But then came instantaneous relief; all the running men were looking at the sky and, doing likewise, I saw five 'planes circling. They were Red bombers, and the soldiers were merely obeying orders and scattering in the fields. Antoine and myself speedily did the same, and for an hour we stood in the shadow of the old Roman aqueduct which, with its grey and lichen-covered arches, soared infinitely high above us, limned against a clear blue sky. Bomb after bomb was dropped—the Reds were trying in vain to hit the huge aluminium-painted petrol reservoirs near the railway station. Finally the "all clear" was given and, much relieved, we climbed back into our cars and moved along.

In Merida I had just time to thank the officer in command of our escort when again the Red 'planes appeared overhead. I made for a cellar conveniently indicated by a flag, and Antoine, who insisted on backing the car into an alley-way, joined me there a moment later. My objective was to see Colonel Tella, the Legion officer in command at Merida, to hear from him how the fighting

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was progressing and to obtain a further pass enabling me to go on to Badajoz, almost due east another fifty miles. But it was difficult to find his headquarters and more difficult to reach them. The Red bombing 'planes were full of energy and were coming over every half-hour or so. Fortunately, their bombs were light, or otherwise Merida would have been destroyed. As it was, the streets were full of fallen tiles, bricks, and masonry, and the only safe places were the deep, well-protected cellars.

Finally I met a staff officer who took me along the streets to the western suburbs, where I could get forward under cover of the red brick walls of the bull-ring and see the Red attacking forces who were at that very moment trying to force their way into the town. Their task was hopeless. I could see them in little groups moving along the low grey hills which were anything from one thousand to three thousand yards distant. There was a lack of cohesion in the infantry itself, a lack of liaison with the Red artillery which was visible and which showed that even before they attacked they were a beaten force. In those days there were no Russian tanks, but the Reds were using armoured cars, three of which I could see motionless and out of action leaning drunkenly against the banks of the road. Machine-gun units belonging both to the Moors and to the Legion were ensconced in the brown fields sloping down before me, and I could see the gunners placing clip after clip in their guns, while the crisp rattle of their firing sounded almost closer than reality. From time to time a Red shell whined overhead to burst with a terrific report in the low brick and mud houses just behind us, while there was a perpetual patter of bullets.

Weeks afterwards I learnt that just on the other side of the bull-ring, a mere hundred yards away, there was at

the same moment another English journalist engaged in watching the fight. He was an old friend of mine, Major Harold Pemberton, son of the well-known novelist, and was representing the *Daily Express*. In Paris I always met him at motor and air shows, and my recollections of him went back for nearly twenty years. That was the last lost opportunity I had of seeing him, for the next time I heard of him he was lying dead under the ruins of a crashed aeroplane on a Scottish hill. He had escaped the dangers of shell and bullet in the Spanish war to fall victim to an aeroplane accident at home.

The fight in front of the bull-ring was quickly decided, and before I had been there half an hour I could see that the Reds were in full retreat and the Patriot forces were bringing up their motor-lorries and their own armoured cars to start off in pursuit. Friendly guides took me down the streets of Merida, for the moment free from the air bomb peril, to Colonel Tella's headquarters. I found him a man of young middle age, tall and athletic, with a smiling oval face and brown hair sleekly brushed back from a high forehead. He spoke in excellent French—I rarely found a Spanish staff or field officer who did not speak either excellent French or English—and outlined to me the position of his forces. I was to meet him and the other leaders—Yague, with his bison's head surmounted with shaggy iron-grey hair; Asensio, like a tall, thin English colonel, his temples grey and his face brick-coloured and seamed; Castejon, of middle stature with broad shoulders and round black head; men who wrote pages of Spanish history and whose names will not be forgotten so long as the Spanish Legion lives—many a time during the next three months on the long road which led to Madrid.



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The sun was still shining down from a blue sky without a single cloud as, with faithful Antoine at the wheel, grumbling as usual at the quality of the petrol which forced him to clean his filter every hundred miles or so, we swept along the road to Badajoz, a sheer delight for motorists, with its even surface and its carefully banked-up curves. The castellated city with its bastions and its walls quickly rose in sight. Along the road there were bodies scattered here and there, evidently Reds. As we swept in a curve to the main gateway, where a Moorish sentry asked for our passes, we could see other bodies lying in a breach.

There had been a fierce fight for Badajoz, which had fallen barely twenty hours before I arrived. The walls of Badajoz, the city of many historic sieges, are some thirty feet thick. Its bastions and casemates would need long battering even from modern artillery. But Colonel Yague, who with Castejon, then only a major, was in command of the assault columns, did not want to destroy the walls and ruin the historic interest of the town. There existed already two breaches, not made by shot or shell but by a modern municipality who wished to run tramlines through to country villages. These were ready means of access, but the Reds had placed sandbag barricades with machine-guns to enfilade them. There were machine-guns also in the bastions and on the walls. The first attack was held up by machine-gun fire and, wisely, Colonel Yague ordered a fresh artillery preparation for the morrow. The Legion and the Moors then made a second attack. Engineers with dynamite blew down one of the gateways, and the Seventh Bandera of the Spanish Legion rushed through the split and broken timbers, taking the sandbag redoubt in front of the main breach from the

rear. Machine-guns were turned on by the Reds, who fought bravely. The Bandera, however, stormed on, taking seconds only to cross the gap of bullet-swept ground. They lost 127 men within twenty seconds, but the survivors with bayonets and clubbed rifles swept through the machine-gun posts, killing all they met. A minute later the Nationalist troops were surging through the town. I, who followed a day later, could see the course of the attack by corpses and bloodstains, by bullet marks and bomb damage up the narrow grey winding streets of old Badajoz. Lorries were still picking up the dead, and four lorries full were slowly driving to an improvised burial ground outside the city.

One of the Badajoz police barracks dominates the main street to the central square and the military headquarters with its ugly shoulder of brick and stone jutting out right across the road, which there makes an L turn. It was occupied by a dozen or so of Blue Assault Police, who, having taken part in the terrible crimes which had made Badajoz run deep with blood, could not surrender, and by some fifty Red militiamen. They were still all lying there stiff and dead when I visited the place. It appears that in the great hall on the first floor of the building they were keeping up a rapid fire and preventing any progress, when they were taken by surprise from behind and killed to a man. They had forgotten to bar and bolt the door of the barracks which gave on a side street, and half a company of the Legion, smashing their way through houses, had found the massive steel doors ajar and had stolen in. Silently they had climbed the double stairs where there was no sentry and had entered the hall to see the whole line of men with backs turned firing into the street below. A whispered order, and after a volley

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the Patriots dashed forward and with bayonet or the deadly Spanish *navaja* they had cleared the place within a minute.

The Red officer in command at Badajoz was Colonel Puigdengala, and I learnt later that he had fled to the Portuguese frontier forty-eight hours earlier. He surrendered to a Portuguese officer at the frontier, saying: "My men would not fight, and so I had to leave" At that moment the sound of the machine-guns could be clearly heard, and the Portuguese frontier officer took Colonel Puigdengala by the arm to the frontier line and said: "Do you hear that? You are only a coward and you have deserted your men" The Red officer later found his way back to Madrid, but, having again left his post somewhat hurriedly, was dealt with in a summary fashion by his own people.

There has grown up round Badajoz a legend of Nationalist terrorism following on Red atrocities. How little truth, however, there is in such allegations can be imagined when the only newspaper evidence available is examined and found to break down completely. Mainly based on the alleged description given by a well-known American newspaper correspondent, it falls to the ground when it is found that the correspondent in question indignantly denies ever having been to Badajoz or having written a line about alleged Nationalist atrocities.

The truth is there was a great deal of street-to-street and house-to-house fighting, and therefore a large number of Reds were shot. Reds who started sniping from houses after the occupation of the town and after all the fighting was over were naturally dealt with in accordance with the normal laws of war which would be exercised by any British officer in command in similar circumstances.

The Reds, before the Nationalists entered the town—while, indeed, they were actually laying the fuses at the gates—had shot some hundred hostages, and when the Nationalists stormed through and captured men who were identified by eyewitnesses as being among the actual murderers their shrift was short. After a summary examination of their identity they were tried by drum-head court martial and shot. This, however, was probably the last instance of drum-head courts martial, for General Franco—a stickler for strict discipline—never accepted such rough and ready methods which might lead to injustice being committed, and insisted that no man should be shot without a proper trial by a public court martial and for definitely proved crime. To bring about this result he did not hesitate to make examples among his own rank and file in cases where he felt it necessary.

Throughout the time I have been with the Spanish Nationalists I never heard of a single case of torture being applied, of prisoners being grossly ill-used, or of their being put to death except by shooting in accordance with the military code for the infliction of capital punishment. I have during the past year met dozens of newspaper correspondents and visitors to Spain of every shade of political opinion, and not once have I heard any serious accusation of any form of atrocities having been committed by the soldiers of the Nationalist Army. On the other hand, the circumstantial and terrible accounts I have heard, often at first hand, of every form of atrocity committed by the Reds would fill a large volume. The Spanish Government has already published evidence of the Red crimes sufficient to convince all but the politically blinded.

IRUN AND SAN SEBASTIAN  
AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

POLITICAL and military objectives, it was felt by General Mola, would both be best served in the north by the capture of Irun and San Sebastian. All the Basque country consists of hills and valleys radiating in every direction, and therefore fighting in it is a difficult problem. The Navarre and Alava Basques were spoiling, however, to get at their enemies, the town-bred Basque Separatists, and the capture of these two towns would drive a wedge between the Basques and Reds of Bilbao and the French frontier

The Carlists of Navarre from the first days of the war had seized and held the hill approaches to both Irun and San Sebastian. They had gone out at night, these sure-footed, fair-haired, red-faced mountaineers, keeping in touch with each other by blowing their hunting horns, and, before the Reds had known it, all the principal peaks and ridges by which Irun might be defended from a distance had fallen into the hands of the Nationalists. Nevertheless the final forts and positions held by the Reds were very strong. They had some heavy artillery and a wealth of machine-guns and automatic weapons. Irun, the first town to be attacked, is naturally very strong, protected from the sea by the ridge and fort of Guadalupe and on the land side by the Puente ridge with the fort of San Marcial, while the Bidassoa, which forms the frontier with France, ensured an unviolated

left flank as well as means of revictualling and ultimate retreat.

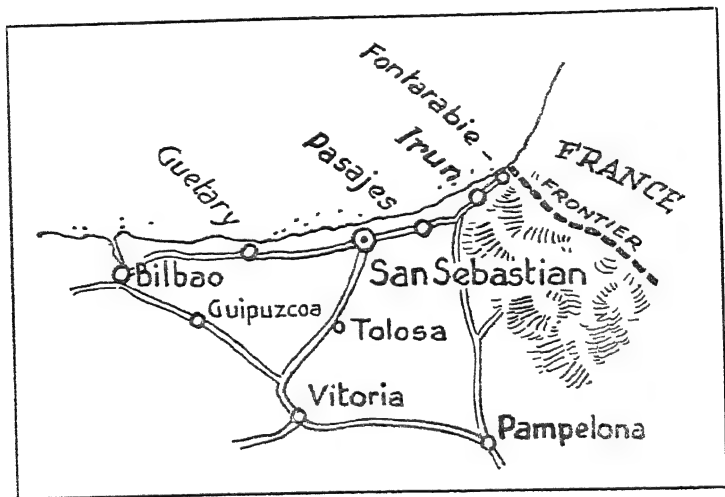
The main line of attack on Irun, it was decided, was to be on the Puentea ridge and Fort San Marcial, and to carry this out there had to be established a road for supplies behind this front. The Reds had blown up the Enderlarza bridge over which this road runs, and by artillery and air raids hindered it being rebuilt. The Nationalists then took a bold but simple step which heightened my opinion of their engineers. They abandoned the road, and tearing up the rails on the light railway which leads from Irun to Vera, they converted the railway into a first-class road. Electric light was installed in the tunnels, and for the weeks the attack lasted there was never any difficulty in getting supplies to the front.

When I found that the main attack was going to be on the Spanish side of the Bidasoa I was delighted. I had been having before this the greatest difficulty in getting my news through to London. The cable at first was not working, and when it did start it was for a long while unreliable. The result was that I had to keep a relay of cars to take my messages back from various parts of the front into France, and in many cases a courier to telephone them direct to London from Hendaye or St. Jean de Luz. As often as not, some important piece of information would be available just after my courier had left, and I would have to make the long journey over the Velate pass to Dancharia and thence to St. Jean de Luz myself. Looking at the records of my first car I find that in the first six weeks of the movement I made the double journey out to Spain and back into France thirty times. It meant arriving in St. Jean de Luz rarely much before ten o'clock at night. My messages would be ready, as I

## IRUN AND SAN SEBASTIAN

had developed the technique of typing them out in my car while travelling, and I could thus dictate them over the telephone, often developing them from a bare framework as I went.

With urgent news I was sometimes kept busy until two o'clock in the morning. In the meantime Antoine, with



SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE POSITION OF IRUN, SAN SEBASTIAN,  
VITORIA AND PAMPELONA

a special squad of mechanics, would be overhauling the car, changing segments, renewing brakebands and fitting tyres so that at six o'clock punctually we would be shooting off back to Spain.

All this entailed a great strain and so I welcomed the change of activities to a well-defined front with a single well-defined objective. the capture of the two Basque coast towns. I could see the importance of the move, and despite the bombast of the Basque Separatists who every night could be heard at the Buffet de la Gare of Hendaye

boasting how Irun was impregnable, and how they had all sworn to fight to the last to keep the hated "Fascists" out, I could also realise that the troops of General Mola were bound sooner or later to force their way over the passes and capture the two towns.

The journey to Vera, headquarters of Colonel Beorlegui, who commanded the Navarre Brigades entrusted with the attack, was short, and it was even possible with the help of some of my Carlist friends at night-time to make the journey shorter still by the simple process of wading the Bidassoa at one of its many fords. In this way the war had been brought, as it were, to my front doorstep in France. Those of us who were in the know could see the piles of stores and the units being brought up through Vera to Enderlarza, and I am afraid many Reds were also in the know, as it was child's play for them to watch most of the preparations from the French side of the Bidassoa where their Communist friends were always willing to keep them informed. During these days many were the shots exchanged across the frontiers, but such incidents were always hushed up as neither side made any official protest.

August 26 ushered in the first big drive against the river road to Irun and the Puente ridge. After a night with the Spanish outposts I crossed the river to my "neutral" post of observation in the garden of a little country hotel on the French side. The garden went down in terraces to the edge of the river, and the whole of the battlefield was in front of me. There was the lazily flowing Bidassoa, there beyond it a narrow strip of waving green maize standing a good five feet high, then a narrow country road with two or three farms, a school house, and two square white houses, used by the Spanish



*carabineros* or Customs guards. Next to the road, but below it, ran the railway line. Above the road the ground rose rapidly in folds—first fields, and then woods and bushes. The slopes were all held by the Reds, and all these seemingly peaceful woods and patches of shrub on which the summer sun was shining would have to be carried before the far end of the slopes, the Puentea ridge itself, could be captured.

The first attack began at six o'clock in the morning when, after a brief artillery bombardment, the files of the Nationalist assault companies began to steal through the maize fields. Their tactics were good, except that the men kept too close together and that the machine-guns destined to keep the Reds down in their trenches were badly placed and many of the Red positions were not under fire. At the same time, a small tank moved forward over a mine crater which cut the road surface, to drive away the Red armoured cars and the Red armoured train. I must pay tribute to the Spanish officer—I was never able to ascertain his name—who walked on the road ahead of the tank piloting it through the mine crater amidst a hail of bullets fired almost point-blank. How he got through the storm of bullets I cannot tell, but we all drew a breath of relief when we saw him step aside into a recess in the bank and thus into comparative safety, his task having been accomplished. The little tank began firing with its machine-gun, and immediately the Red armoured cars and the train began slowly to move away. Fifty Carlists then ran forward and began with sandbags and timber to fill the mine crater so that Patriot armoured cars and lorries might pass in their turn. Many of them were killed and wounded, but as they dropped we saw other volunteers run forward to take their places. When the

job was finished, the Nationalist armoured cars rattled forward, but the first to try to get over jammed at once. The skirting of armour plate was too low and, catching the timber track, tore it up. This was the first contretemps, but there were to be others even more serious. The troops on the river-bed had meanwhile made their assault. They had captured the first objectives, the school house and Lodiena farm and beyond that the railway station and Custom-house. They had dashed forward bravely, carrying the scarlet and gold National flag, but they had sustained heavy losses because they "bunched" too much. But rallying round the flag when the ensign fell, they stormed the enemy strong points, and the armoured cars and train already in retreat made off at full speed.

The Red machine-gun fire was overpowering. At one moment I estimated that there must have been something like four hundred machine-guns and automatic rifles and sub-machine-guns firing from the Red trenches. But it is also true that I have never heard such a wasteful fire, of which at least seventy per cent must have been mis-directed. Had that not been the case, all the advanced Patriot units would have been wiped out. As it was, the Nationalists who had tried to climb the slope towards the ridge and to filter through the woods, were held up and were glad indeed to be able to dig themselves in before nightfall on the fringes of the woods they had been unable to take. The heavy loss in the afternoon's fighting caused Colonel Beorlegui to cancel orders for a further attack, which had been planned for six o'clock.

When I visited the Carlist lines after nightfall I found plenty of signs of battle. There were little groups of dead in the maize fields. One young fellow I distinctly

remember, who was lying by the riverside next to the ford; he had apparently crept there wounded in the heat of the day to get some water and had been struck down by a machine-gun bullet. The wounded had already all been evacuated.

It was a strange scene. Bullets and shells were coming down the road in bursts from Behobia, while the school house which was burning fiercely threw a fitful light on the fifty engineers who were toiling with sandbags, at work on the mine crater, making a good job of it this time. The roadway would be ready for to-morrow, but its failure to-day, which held up the armoured cars, had delayed operations at a vital moment.

Then there came one of those periods of procrastination and hesitancy which have been so frequent throughout the war. The Nationalist high command, seriously concerned at the volume of machine-gun fire and the certain heavy losses if their troops were again to be sent to the assault of thousands of yards of steep, sloping, scrub-covered country, decided to send for heavy artillery and to hoist six-inch guns on the hills beyond Enderlarza before continuing their attacks. In the meantime, however, two night attacks were directed from the farther slopes on Fort San Marcial. The attacking columns were guided by Carlists who knew every inch of the ground, and we who lay in the maize fields by the river bank could tell by the sound of the firing what progress was being made. The noise was terrific at first, but it then began to die down, veering far off to the right. A Carlist captain sitting beside me on the ground, said, "It is all over. the hill was too steep, and they are being driven back." He was right; some slight progress had been registered on the top of the ridge, but the Red barricades and blockhouses in the

woods held out, and the Nationalists had lost heavily for a gain of only a hundred yards or so.

The Reds all this time were receiving unashamed aid from across the French frontier. The consumption of small arms ammunition was enormous, but their ammunition columns received hundreds of thousands of rounds each night from France. Their unskilled use of machine-guns and automatic rifles—later the Reds were to learn how to look after these delicate arms—had put scores of them out of action, but here again spare guns and spare parts were taken across from France every night.

It was not until September 2 that the next push was attempted, and this time, with plenty of heavy and light artillery, it was successful, with comparatively trifling losses. The Red trenches were plastered with high explosives, and many Red comrades early thought it safer to withdraw to Irun and join in the more congenial and less dangerous work of looting houses and setting them on fire.

Punctually at noon the Nationalist batteries opened fire. Then at one o'clock the barrage shifted to over the Puentea ridge, and suddenly I saw a glint of bayonets in the patch of wood that we observers for facility of reference had dubbed "T" wood. Five files of men emerged at a slow walking pace—remember the slope they were climbing was very steep—and then deployed. Two flags were being carried. From time to time a man fell, but the line moved slowly onwards, and then it reached the crest and the flags were planted in a couple of redoubts.

It was evident that the next stage of the fight would be on the reverse slopes of the Puentea, and so with three companions I hurried over the French hills to a fresh point of observation. I say the French hills, for they were almost as much under fire as those on the Spanish side.

We had to scramble and to slide and do a lot of moving forward on all fours before we lost the sound of machine-gun bullets whistling overhead and cutting leaves and twigs from the trees and shrubs. Finally, without hurt, we managed to reach a friendly ravine in which we had full shelter from stray bullets, and thus again reached the water-side in full view of the turn in the road and the last great sandbag barricade next the Behobia Custom-house—a square whitewashed building with its loopholes and its machine-guns.

There was a little group of Basque peasants—three young men, two women, and a child—at this point sheltering behind the walls of a tiny farmhouse. They greeted me politely in the Basque fashion, and one of the women said: “Take care, Monsieur; do not stand in a line with that window, for the bullets come through there. My grandmother was killed there in the last war.” She meant, of course, the last Carlist war of 1875 when Irun was also attacked and when in the same way bullets came flying across the frontier.

This time they kept hitting the wall of the house and occasionally chipping a tile on the roof. This worried the watch dog, which kept running out on to the road to see what was happening, and growling uneasily. Each time one of the young men would go down to fetch him back at imminent risk to his own safety.

Across the river I could see our old friend the armoured train with steam up preparing to make another dash to the rear. A battery of four-inch guns on the slopes of the old fort was being hauled on to lorries to be taken away. In a few minutes, it would be under full machine-gun fire. On the reverse side of the Puente ridge Reds were hurrying away to the rear in twos and threes.

## THE SPANISH WAR

At the Custom-house barricade on the Red side there were two armoured cars and two brand-new saloon cars, evidently belonging to some Communist or Anarchist militia officer. The armoured cars were firing continuously, and from every window of the Custom-house building the barrels of machine-guns and automatic rifles protruded. The din was deafening and the cause was evident. Lumbering up the river road came three Nationalist armoured cars side by side, their heavy machine-guns spitting fire at the Red barricade. They came up quite slowly until they were within twenty yards' distance of the barricade, and then two of them put on a little spurt and came butting at the six-foot high wall of sandbags. Some of the bags fell, and the cars, still firing at this terribly close range, backed away and then again butted at the barricade, and a few more bags fell down.

The Red fire was dying down from the Custom-house, which was pierced like a sieve with bullet holes, but the Red armoured cars were still in action. Four Reds, attired in blue, ran out from behind the Custom-house with a wooden case. It was full of dynamite bombs which they began to light and throw over the barricade at the attacking Nationalist cars. These home-made bombs went off with a frightful explosion, but they appeared to do no damage at all and did not stop them battering away at the barricade. The four men—I was told that three of them were French and one a Belgian—were extremely brave, for they had little shelter and had to expose themselves every time they threw a bomb.

Along the railway track, following the retreating armoured train, the garrison of the Custom-house redoubt were running as fast as they could; columns of

flames roared up from the two Red armoured cars and from the two saloon cars on the roadside, and more men came running away. Only remained the four figures, crouched behind the sandbags, lighting their dynamite sticks and throwing them. Then there came a tremendous shout, and a score of men waving the Nationalist flag leaped and bounded down the slopes of the Puerta ridge whose last redoubt had fallen. In a minute they were on the four men, there was a whirr of rifles, and four bodies lay still on the road. Custom-house Redoubt had fallen, and the road to Behobia and Irun was open.

The attack had begun at one o'clock and it was now just five o'clock. Antoine offered to go and fetch the car, which we had left behind a bend of the road at Biriadou, and he set off at a run, jumping from one ditch to another and sometimes bent double to avoid the bullets which were still sweeping the road. When he came back with the car, which had four bullet-holes in it, I was able to set off for the Spanish headquarters, crossing the hills and the frontier at Vera. I was then told that fort San Marcial had fallen and that the Nationalist volunteers and legionaries were holding all the houses on the fringe of Behobia, but were not advancing as General Beorlegui had ordered that there was to be no street fighting at night.

There was little doubt but that the morale of the Red militia had gone to pieces. Hundreds of them were crossing the river and taking refuge in France. While I was watching the attack on the sandbag redoubt I saw one militiaman making up his mind what to do—fight or run away and live to fight another day. He had come from the redoubt on the road and ran as fast as he could down the little pathway on the river-side. He was a

tall young man with unshaven face, curly brown hair and blue eyes. He was wearing the universal blue overalls with a scarlet handkerchief and the Basque rope slippers. As he ran, bullets were kicking up the dust all round him. Finally he reached one of the little sentry boxes used by the Spanish Customs patrols at night. He took shelter behind it and mopped his brow. It was visible that had there been a Red officer near by, or had there been any discipline, he and dozens of others could have been rounded up to continue the resistance. But he was all alone. Peering round the sentry box, he could see the Red cars still blazing down the road and the National flag now flying bravely over the redoubt. To the right of him in the maize fields there were other runaways. Suddenly with a great splash his rifle whirled into the river. The man then took off his red kerchief and stuffed it in his pocket. Next he took off his cord slippers which he tied round his neck and, stooping, he washed some of the grime from his face in a pool of rain-water on the path. Then picking up courage he ran out from his shelter along the path and dived into the river. Two minutes later he was standing a few yards away from me shaking himself like a dog. The elder of the two young Basques next to me made a sign, and one of the women took the young man by the hand and led him into the house. "He is a Basque," was the brief explanation, "and we stick together even when we are fighting on different sides. He is a Red and we are Whites, but we have to shelter him and I trust that Monsieur will say nothing of what he has seen."

The progress made by the Nationalists was visible next morning, when from the French side I could see my Spanish friends, including Captain Aguilera, the Press



officer, standing on the other side of the Behobia bridge. Taking the weary road through the hills and by Vera and Enderlarza I was able to join them a few hours later, and was thus able to enter Irun at the same time as the leading companies of Colonel Beorlegui's victorious columns. The Reds, who had set fire to the main streets of Irun, which contained some very fine buildings, were holding out at the bridge and the railway station.

When we entered the town the whole of it appeared to be one mass of flames and we could feel the heat hundreds of yards away. At the cross-roads the Reds, who had been abundantly supplied with provisions and ammunition from France during the night, were still firing.

Not only were the Reds being revictualled abundantly, not only were they receiving arms and ammunition from France, but they used the French end of the bridge as a place of refuge. One young Red stood in French territory, flourishing a huge automatic, and questioned all refugees and militiamen who came across. Some Reds he turned back, he and two young fellows with him acting as a "stragglers' post." Others he allowed through on the promise they would return. These then deposited their guns and ammunition in the French Custom-house and proceeded to the railway buffet to have a hot meal. On their way back they would pick up their guns and pouches and dash across the bridge again. It is true the Prefect of the department and the Special Commissary were busy at the station dealing with the thousands of refugees who were arriving by boat from across the river at Fuentarabia. It is a pretty trait that the boatmen of Irun and Fuentarabia throughout the troubles ferried over both Nationalists and Reds who might be in danger and never charged a penny for their services.

## THE SPANISH WAR

Colonel Beorlegui, tall and elegant, with brown hair only tinged with grey, was standing a few paces from the cross-roads dictating orders to his adjutant, when a shot rang out from a neighbouring building and he stumbled and fell. The bullet had struck him in the thigh. A surgeon rushed up and hastily dressed the wound. But Colonel Beorlegui refused to enter his waiting car and be driven off to the field ambulance, saying, "There is plenty of time; this little affair will be over in a few minutes." But the wound, slight though it was at first thought to be, was destined to prove fatal. Whether it was due to Colonel Beorlegui's action in refusing to go immediately to the ambulance or to some subsequent imprudence, gangrene set in and the gallant officer died five weeks later when holding a command on the Aragon front. It was only in the last ten days of his life that he consented to leave his column and be taken to hospital.

Legionaries had broken into the house where the solitary sniper had taken shelter, and he was disposed of in a second. The same fate overtook seven Communists before my eyes a moment later. Out of a side street dashed a huge grey car and up the avenue in the direction of San Sebastian. Already there were many Nationalist staff cars in the streets, and this grey car filled with Reds might have passed unnoticed but for the fact that, holding automatics at each window and also through a smashed pane behind, they opened rapid fire at the soldiers advancing in single file on either side of the road. Bullets were flying in every direction, for soldiers ahead also opened fire on the car, and I found a doorway handy to take shelter. One of the first shots fired by the Nationalists must have hit the driver, for the car lurched drunkenly at a street corner and, sliding across the road,

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came to a standstill next a tree. The Reds in the car jumped out and tried to flee, still firing. But not one of them got more than ten yards. I went and looked at the car and found it crammed with arms, while in the luggage container were a dozen bottles of brandy and whisky and a large case of champagne.

The attack against the railway station was now being organised. It was under the orders of a Spanish officer called Major Morphi, and when I questioned him I found that his original name was O'Murphy and that he was the descendant of one of many hundreds of Irish officers who came to Spain after Limerick in the days of William and Mary. He was a stout and merry-faced fellow who fell only a week later in one of the attacks on San Sebastian.

A few hand grenades quickly thrown cleared out the railway station, and so in less than three hours Irun had been taken. During these days of fighting both round Irun and San Sebastian, we met a very large number of Catalonian Nationalists, who, having escaped from what they described as "the hell of Barcelona," had hurriedly volunteered in the ranks of the Requetes to fight the hated Reds who had been slaughtering all their nearest and dearest. The head of these Catalonian volunteers was an enormous man. I heard his name at the time but forget it. He was certainly six foot two, but with a bulk and girth, and such shoulders and thighs as made him appear almost squat. I do not think that I have ever seen quite so bulky a man. He walked almost with a shuffle but at great speed and silently. I was told that in the first hill fighting round Irun he was famous for his night scouting expeditions, when he would go out and surprise Red sentries.

## THE SPANISH WAR

Another Catalanian whom I met was a major of slight build and middle age. He had managed to leave Barcelona in August after having been the eyewitness of terrible massacres and crimes. I never dared ask him what had happened to his family, as he bore the half-dazed, half-fixed look of those who have been through the fire of mental suffering and who only live for the single objective of revenge on those who had been responsible for the torturing of their dear ones. Throughout these months in Spain it was a delicate matter ever to question anybody as to what had happened to his family—mother, wife, or sisters—so terrible are the consequences of any civil war, but especially of one waged by the pagan Reds encouraged by Moscow. This major told me, however, of his escape from Barcelona. He had been wandering round the city, living from hand to mouth and never daring to go to his own house where he would have been recognised, and still less to one of his country seats in the vicinity of the city. One day, however, he met a man who was a well-known leader of a smuggler band, reputed to know all the paths across the hills into France. He went up to the man and asked him if he would smuggle him out of the country.

"I can pay you nothing now," he told the smuggler, "and it all depends which side wins in the present war if I can ever pay you anything. But, if the Nationalists win, I guarantee on my word of honour that I will give you ten thousand pesetas." The smuggler who, though professing absolute political neutrality, must for some reason or other have had a secret but prudent leaning towards the Anti-Reds, fell in with the proposal and promised to take the man out of the country. "I make one condition," he said, "that is, that whatever I say you

immediately agree to, however terrible it may appear to you. We are dealing with monsters and not with men, and a single false step will cost both of us our lives. So reflect well and swear on your word of honour that you will assent to all I say and copy my words and actions slavishly."

The Catalanian major agreed, and at a fixed hour two days afterwards the couple started out on a long and complicated cross-country journey towards an isolated frontier village. They went on foot and then by train and then by country motor-bus. About four miles from the frontier the smuggler alighted from a motor-bus and, telling his companion to follow him, walked into the local headquarters of the Anarchist Union. There he gave the regular salute with raised fist imitated by the major, and addressing the Red leader, said: "My companion Pablo here and myself have been tracking down a couple of priests who are trying to cross into France in disguise. They have come through Barcelona from Lerida and we have been ordered to follow them by the F.A.I. headquarters there. Showing a handful of papers stamped with the Anarchist symbols to back up his statement he went on: "Pablo here caught sight of them on the motor-bus this morning and recognised them. They are now at the village inn, that is so, is it not?" and he turned to the major. The latter nodded, feeling quite sick with fear. Was it true, he asked himself, that two unfortunate priests were trying to escape and was he purchasing his freedom at the price of their betrayal?

But the smuggler did not allow anybody time for reflection. Brandishing his huge sheath-knife he said, "This is what those devils need," and, followed by the group of Anarchists, rushed out towards the local village inn. There two middle-aged men were seated

who corresponded exactly to the description the smuggler had given of the priests, and they were promptly and roughly taken into custody. However, they had little difficulty in proving they were not priests but two Communists on an official mission. Apologies offered and wine bought, the smuggler and the Catalonian refugee found themselves despite their "mistake" very popular with their new-found Anarchist friends.

The smuggler, taking his Catalonian refugee aside, said to him, "I saw your look of horror and was afraid you would betray yourself. I would not myself give away a priest," and here he crossed himself. "I knew who those men were, but I knew they looked sufficiently like clericals to make my story seem true. Now we are known here as good Anarchists, but we must profit from that to get across the frontier quickly, or else they may ask us questions which we cannot answer." The smuggler then brought the conversation round cleverly to the frontier and, candidly admitting his profession, said that he proposed visiting an acquaintance whose help he often sought when taking goods to and fro. Two Anarchists volunteered to accompany them, and it was thus escorted that the smuggler and his protégé reached the frontier and crossed into France. The smuggler in bidding farewell to the Catalonian major told him that he meant to return to his home, and that he was quite certain that none of the Anarchists would ever guess what a trick had been played on them.

The capture of San Sebastian did not take exceedingly long, nor was it accompanied by very severe fighting. It had not natural defences like the ridges round Irun, and the spirit of its defenders had been lowered by the stories told by the Red militiamen who had run away from Irun.

The Basque inhabitants, too, were anxious to avoid their own property being burnt by Anarchists and Communists as in Irun, and it was early that they thought of marching out and surrendering the town. All through this fighting the position of the autonomous Basques was very peculiar. They were fighting for Home Rule, but most of them were men of property and of moderate opinions and firm attachments to their traditional Roman Catholic faith. They were condemned by their bishops for their alliance with the anti-religious Communists and Anarchists, and looked upon with suspicion and disdain by their strange allies. The Basque Autonomists, it should be emphasised, are only a minority in the four Spanish Basque provinces and have not the slightest right to pretend to represent the Basque people. In the whole of this northern campaign, which was only of real importance in so far as the capture of Irun went, the main fighting was centred round Oviedo, where the so-called Asturian miners made a really formidable force. I say "so-called" because the great majority of these miners work in the Asturias mines, but are not Asturians. They come from every part of Spain, live in villages apart, and rarely mingle with the true peasant stock of the province. They are usually despised by the local Asturian peasants, who in times of civil war nearly always take arms against them.

The miners, however, actuated by bitter hatred of any régime of order though they were privileged workers with shorter hours and higher pay than any in Spain, did fight with courage. Their famous *dynamiteros*, who went into action with twenty dynamite cartridges slung round their waists, would have been of little value in ordinary warfare or against well-trained troops, but they did produce terrible havoc in house-to-house fighting in crowded

streets against eager but untrained Nationalist militia. At the outset this was the main story of the terrible fight for Oviedo, where Colonel Aranda held out in the city for two and a half months, his garrison of four thousand men being reduced to little over six hundred able-bodied men before he was relieved.

The Reds, in the first days of the movement, had managed to rush the outworks of the town, and day after day spent their time trying, by blowing down house after house, to work their way to the centre of the city. As in the famous rising of 1934, the cathedral was the main objective of attack and, as in that rising, the cathedral held out with its immensely thick walls and its commanding fire and enabled the Reds to be pushed back. In revenge, in their last desperate attacks, aided by columns of Russians and other foreigners, they trained their artillery on the cathedral, and by constant shelling razed its great tower level with the roof of the nave. The whole district round Oviedo is a terrible medley of mountain spurs and ravines, worse even than round Bilbao, and this explains the protracted fierceness of the struggle for the city.



## THE RELIEF OF THE ALCAZAR AT TOLEDO SEPTEMBER 27-8

THE approach to Madrid from the west lies up the Tagus valley. The road is on the right bank of the Tagus, which for most of its course provides a sufficient flank protection. The country on the left bank of the Tagus is mountainous, and with few roads is little adapted to large military movements. An army marching towards Madrid from Caceres in the west has, however, to guard its left flank from attacks coming down the valleys in both the Sierra de Gredos and the southern fringes of the Sierra Guadarrama. Those were exactly the problems which confronted General Franco when he marched his African expeditionary force, which with the addition of local volunteers numbered barely 20,000 men, to the relief of Toledo and the assault on Madrid.

Engaged in the Tagus valley, he had to safeguard his flank, and therefore he called on General Mola to push into the Gredos mountains and free the two main valleys, that of the Puerto del Pico and that leading to St. Martin Valdeiglesias. It was only as these operations were carried out that his main force was able to proceed. The capture of the Pico pass preceded the relief of Toledo, the freeing of the St. Martin Valdeiglesias road followed a few days afterwards. All these operations were exceedingly venturesome, but the Reds at this stage showed so little courage and initiative that General Franco and his officers felt they could afford to take risks.

## THE SPANISH WAR

Before describing the Toledo and Madrid campaign, which I followed from day to day, it is necessary to dwell for a minute on the naval situation which so long restricted the revictualling, and above all the reinforcement, of the brilliant column of African irregulars and of the Spanish Legion, all of whom had their depots and their training grounds across the sea

In July when the movement broke out the largest part of the Spanish fleet was concentrated—its annual manoeuvres just over—in Carthagena harbour. For some reason or other the Navy had been rather neglected when the movement was being prepared in secret, and the result was that though the majority of officers sympathised with the rising, committees of sailors took possession of the ships, massacred some three hundred officers out of hand, and imprisoned an equal number. A retired officer, Captain Manuel Buiza, took command of the now Red fleet for the Government with the rank of admiral. He had under his command one large battleship, the *Jaime Primero*, three cruisers, the *Cervantes*, *Libertad*, and *Mendez Nunez*, twelve large destroyers, three torpedo boats, and eleven submarines.

The Nationalists at Ferrol and at Cadiz had managed after a superhuman fight to retain control of one battleship, the *España* (since sunk by hitting a mine off Santander), four cruisers, the *Canarias*, *Baleares*, *Almirante Cervera* and *Republica*, one modern destroyer, the *Velasco*, and a few quite obsolete gunboats. Two of the Nationalist cruisers, however, were in dock and not ready for sea.

The result was that clearly at the outset the command of the sea belonged to the Reds. General Franco in the early days was obliged to bring his African troops across by plane because he could not trust them on the

## THE RELIEF OF THE ALCAZAR AT TOLEDO

sea. Only once, on August 5, were five transports carrying three thousand men able to force this blockade. On the other hand the Red fleet was able to protect the passage and landing of a large force which intended to overrun the island of Majorca. This attempt was defeated, but the Red fleet had played its part without failure

In September, however, the activity of the Nationalist fleet began to make itself felt. The ships which had been in dry-dock or even in course of construction had been hurriedly made seaworthy. The cruiser *Cervera* was able to co-operate in the capture of San Sebastian, while the *Velasco* burnt the petrol tanks of Bilbao. By this time the cruiser *Canarias* was also fitted out and, accompanied by the *Cervera*, steamed for the Straits of Gibraltar. There, on September 29, the two cruisers surprised the Red blockade patrol of destroyers, sinking one and forcing the other to seek refuge in Casablanca harbour. This was the turning point of the war at sea. The *Velasco* sank the last remaining submarine on the Atlantic coast, and since then the Red ships have hardly ever dared even to put to sea. Their engines have been neglected, their crews are perpetually in a state of semi-mutiny, and their officers are without energy or else are incapable. Nationalist ships have been able to blockade Bilbao, Red commerce and Red supply ships have been held up. Valuable stores of equipment and uniforms purchased by the Reds have gone to swell the supplies of the National ordnance department. I have seen thousands of Nationalist soldiers wearing American army great-coats which had been bought in Mexico for the Reds, but which had changed their destination on the high seas.

There is no doubt but that the fact of the command of the seas changing hands at the end of September and

from being Red becoming Nationalist, had a major influence on the conduct of the war.

The primary military objective of the columns of General Franco's expeditionary force marching up the Tagus valley was undoubtedly Madrid. But in war, particularly civil war, sentiment also plays its part, and the wiser dictates of sound strategy had to give way before the imperative political and national duty of rescuing the garrison of the Alcazar. This medieval palace, or rather fortress, a great square building with massive walls completed by Charles the Fifth, had been held against repeated attacks by the Reds since July 19, by a small body of officers, Civil Guards, and volunteers, together with a handful of cadets following holiday courses in the famous Academy. Little was known of what was happening in Toledo. Time after time the Reds had announced the capture of the Alcazar and the massacre of its little garrison, but time after time the Nationalist war 'planes flying over the city were able to assure themselves that it was still holding out and that the red and gold banner was still flying from its topmost roof. It was known that there was little food, but those who were acquainted with Colonel Moscardo, the officer in charge of its defence, declared that whatever happened he would never surrender but would rather die buried under the ruins of the great palace. Brave words like this have often been spoken, but in this case they came nearer the literal truth than many times before in history. The defence and the relief of the Alcazar at Toledo are both of them feats rarely rivalled in military history and, as examples of unselfish devotion to duty and exemplary bravery, are worthy of being cited, in histories yet to be written, as signal examples for future generations.

## THE RELIEF OF THE ALCAZAR AT TOLEDO

The troops of the African expeditionary force, when I reached the Tagus valley from San Sebastian, had made much progress since I had last seen them at Merida and Badajoz on August 14. The operations from Merida had been rapid and daring. They were described from day to day in the *Daily Mail* at the time by Mr. Paul Bewsher, who, when he could be persuaded to speak, had a fund of hair-raising stories of his experiences in the battle line in the company of an Italian friend, Signor Benedetti, another well-known journalist. "We used," he told me, "simply to drive to the front, and when we saw a battery firing or a machine-gun in position, we would walk to the nearest officer and question him. 'What is that village?' 'Oh, Santa Ollala.' 'Good. Where are your first troops?' 'What, down there in that glen? Well, you won't take Santa Ollala till this afternoon?' And we would then drive back to the nearest town, Talavera de la Reina, say, for a hurried lunch, a hurried message put on the cable, and then back by the same road to enter Santa Ollala at the same time as the first troops of the Legion or the first Moors, shouting their war cries."

But often things did not go quite so easily as all that, and Paul Bewsher was less ready to speak of occasions when he had to ditch his car to avoid shelling, and wait two hours lying flat in a shell-hole until the Red bombardment had finished and he could continue his progress to the rear with his dispatch for his newspaper.

Two days before I reached Talavera de la Reina, Mr. Bewsher had been present at the capture of Maqueda, a key position, on the line of march to Toledo, and he had been able by his presence in the front line to obtain an exclusive story of the fighting which was not available to anybody else for more than twenty-four hours. The

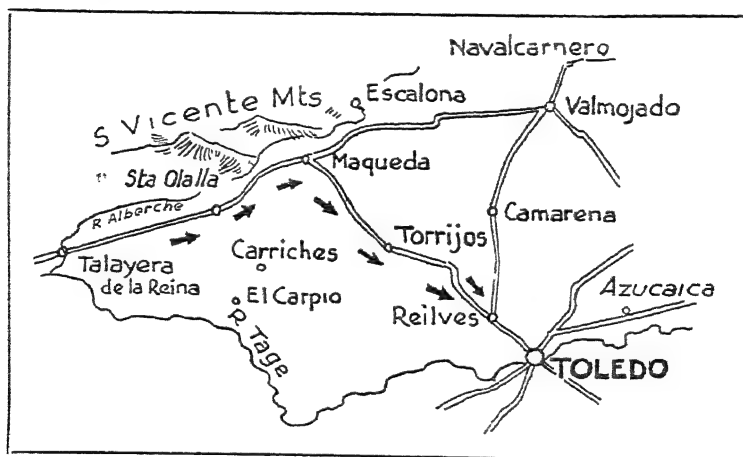
nomination of General Varela to command the columns marching on Toledo, and the hurried constitution of a Press office at Talavera de la Reina, changed entirely the face of things, and such personal and unaccompanied trips to the front—with their risks, but with their advantages—as we had been able to make at Merida, Badajoz, Talavera, and Maqueda, were soon officially banned and became in practice very rare and difficult.

To relieve Toledo, General Varela, now in command of the expeditionary force under General Franco, had to turn half right from Maqueda and strike for the banks of the Tagus, there distant some 45 miles from the main Madrid road. It was hazardous because, though the road from Avila to Talavera through the Puerto del Pico had been seized, the foothills of the Gredos were still strongly held by the Reds, who also controlled all the upper waters of the Alberche and had scattered detachments all along his line of march, holding villages barely three thousand yards from his sole lines of communication. I have spoken on the question of these tactics both with General Franco, who ordered them, and General Varela, who carried them out. Both declared bluntly that the whole march was fantastically wrong from the text-book point of view. Both of them, however, defended the action they took, on the ground of the imperative necessity to capture Toledo, and on the ground that at that moment they were dealing with enemy forces which were badly led and which were incapable of taking the initiative and manœuvring. To such a clumsy foe they were opposing the best troops of Spain and troops accustomed to taking risks.

On my way from Burgos to the southern front, I drove over the Pico pass and found that I was the first journalist

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to have taken that road since it had been cleared of Reds. General Franco used cavalry for these mountain operations, and they were a great success. Two brigades of cavalry with one brigade of mechanised and lorry-carried riflemen composed the forces of General (then Colonel) Monasterio. Their first feat was to capture the Red positions at the Puerto del Pico. Here the road runs



SKETCH MAP SHOWING LINE OF ADVANCE OF TOLEDO  
RELIEF FORCE

through a series of narrow defiles, till just before it takes the plunge down the pass to reach, miles away, the Tagus valley and Talavera, it passes between two immense shoulders of rock which tower two hundred feet above its level. It was a position which could have been held by a hundred men against a brigade. The Reds had placed artillery, which they had hoisted with immense difficulty, on the two shoulders of rock, and thus commanded the winding road and the defiles for some eight miles. On the road itself elaborate defence positions had been built and were occupied by some five hundred men.

Colonel Monasterio sent two squadrons to capture the pass, and they took it with the loss of half a dozen men. He told me the story of the fight when I was passing through his headquarters at Avila on my way south.

"I obtained the services of an old hunter's guide. You may know that the Sierra de Gredos is known for a variety of mountain goat which roams at very great altitudes and is extremely difficult to approach. Hunting parties always use the services of these guides who know every inch of the land. He made me a map of the positions held by the Reds and assured me that he could take my men, by paths which their horses could climb, to points where, dismounting, they would be able to attack the two artillery positions from behind. I myself would attack along the road the moment the two flank parties fired rockets showing they were in position.

"Everything went according to plan. After six hours' climbing in the mountains the two squadrons reached their assigned posts and attacked at three in the morning. There was hardly a fight at all. My troopers, stumbling and sliding, rushed down the slope to the enemy guns, reaching the position with ease. At this point they met with no resistance and shot only half a dozen men, the rest racing off down the path they had cut to the road in the defile below. Quickly machine-guns were put in position, and the Red barricades and redoubts in the pass itself were brought under fire just as dawn was breaking and before the Reds realised what had happened. At the same time, my own advance guard came up and began a frontal attack. The Reds again ran away without fighting. About a hundred of them were shot down, but over a hundred more killed themselves in the haste of their retreat by falling over the precipices."



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When I reached the Puerto del Pico there were still signs of the fight on every side—abandoned equipment and broken rifles. It was difficult to understand how the Reds had ever allowed themselves to be surprised in such a position where the advantages of natural fortifications were all in their favour. On the other hand, it was easy to realise what a disaster surprise and defeat would be in such a place. The Puerto del Pico is, to my mind, one of the most beautiful passes in Europe. Great peaks rise to some eight thousand feet on either side, and the pass opens out on a semicircle of mountains with the steepest slopes. The road, with a score of hairpin bends, winds its way slowly from side to side of the semicircle to drop fifteen hundred feet in ten miles by motor-car, but barely two miles as the crow flies. Crossing the road both at the top and the bottom of the pass runs one of the longest stretches of well-paved and well-preserved Roman roads I have seen. It zigzags down the mountain-side like an immense staircase, and can be traced practically intact all the way to Arenas de San Pedro, fifteen miles distant. The peasants with their mule trains use it to the exclusion of the road, which they dislike owing to the passing motor-cars and its greater length. Along this road which was a famous Roman highway must have passed on horse-back or in their mule litters all the great Roman generals who ruled over Spain, with their retinues, their slaves, and their escorts.

On either side are mountains tipped with eternal snow, and then come the great grey and purple slopes which simply glow with colour under the autumn Castilian sun, until gradually the green, first of scrub oak and then of pasture land, invades them. In the narrow valley below a tiny stream runs, the Roman road crossing it by a high

arched bridge, and there are silvery olive groves with here and there the darker green of orange and lemon trees. Clustered together are groups of houses, first Cuevas del Valle and then Mombeltran, with sombre red-tiled irregular roofs and low, deep eaves jutting out over the balconies which give an Alpine appearance to these valley dwellings. Mombeltran has a beautiful square castle, belonging to the Duque de Albuquerque, but now, unfortunately, in sad disrepair; from there the road winds on to Arenas de San Pedro, the scene of a terrible massacre by the Reds during August. It was captured by General Varela's troops in the middle of September, thus effecting a liaison with Monasterio's cavalry coming down from the Pico pass.

I have crossed the Sierra de Gredos over a score of times in fair weather and in foul, and I have never tired of its constantly changing beauty, now outlined in a clear blue sky and now with a black, snow-menacing canopy of clouds overhead and a bitter wind blowing with almost incredible strength. On one such day I was going back to Avila, with Mr. Victor Console, the famous photographer, who was anxious to confide some important pictures to the official courier so that they should reach the French frontier speedily, when the snow caught us before we reached the summit of the pass. We had no chains for our car wheels, but managed to get out of the Pico pass all right only to find a snow-covered mountain plateau in front of us, and finally, to get hopelessly involved in a snow drift on the Menga pass. It was bitterly cold, and there was the prospect of remaining there for many hours or else going on foot to Mengamunoz, a small village about five miles along the road. We were just making up our minds to abandon the car when a mule

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train came in sight. The muleteers quickly understood our difficulty and, with five mules harnessed to the car, they pulled it out of the drift. They proudly refused to take any money, but timidly requested Victor Console, who had taken a number of photographs of the incident, to send them some copies of his pictures.

From Arenas de San Pedro the road speedily joins up with the great Madrid-Merida highway, known as the Estremadura road, for it is the best motor road to Seville and the south. Talavera de la Reina, the scene of one of Wellington's most famous Spanish victories, is only a few miles from this junction.

Talavera may be very old, it may be typically Spanish, but it is certainly not a beautiful or attractive town. I say this with great fear of offending its alcalde, General Emilio Barrio, who is one of the most amiable Spaniards I have ever met. When we arrived in Talavera, a little Press unit composed of two cars and three journalists, he received us with courtesy, and as the two hotels were full sent his town beadle to requisition rooms for our benefit. But Talavera is very primitive, and this condition was naturally added to by the Red terror which had lasted for nearly two months. Much had been destroyed, there was a scarcity of food, of wine, and even water, and this was rendered all the more perceptible by the fact that it was then the base headquarters for all General Varela's columns, numbering some fifteen thousand men. In many of the streets the drainage system consisted merely of a central gutter or stream often a yard wide and a foot and a half deep. Into this open drain everything was thrown, and the resultant smell can perhaps be better imagined than described. For days on end the water supply was strictly limited for cooking purposes. The

drinking water, when it was available, was of a greasy, opaque appearance and had been very liberally chlorinated. Even weeks after the capture of Talavera from the Reds the food was extremely bad. It seemed impossible to persuade any cook not to use immense quantities of rancid oil and also huge amounts of garlic

Finally with Jean d'Hospital, a French journalist of talent whom I have already mentioned, we formed a small mess, taking an apartment in a private house on the station road. There in a small, over-furnished dining-room we had some of the very best meals served anywhere in Spain. We used to invite staff officers and others to lunch or to dine with us, and they said that not even General Franco's table was quite so good. The landlord of the house had kept a fashionable restaurant just outside Madrid on the Corunna road, and he used to wait on us in a white jacket while the maid merely passed him the dishes. He was a man who had led a strange career, first being a professor of philosophy before devoting his attention to the culinary arts. He was calm and self-possessed and never seemed to lose his presence of mind. I remember one day when six large Russian bombers came and, trying to hit the railway station distant about two hundred yards with big bombs weighing nearly half a ton, dropped sixteen of them in fields right in front of our house. Four fell quite near, and the displacement of air blew the windows in besides removing a substantial portion of the roof. D'Hospital, our guest—a Spanish major—and myself flattened ourselves on the ground against the main wall until all was over and then, brushing the plaster from our clothes, went out to see what damage had been done. Actually one old man and his mule were found dead, though with no trace of outward

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injury. Both of them had been killed by the shock. When we returned we found our *dueno* or butler-landlord had laid a fresh cloth and was calmly waiting to serve us with the next dish. "I am afraid," he said, "you will be cold with no window-panes. But I have another house which is not inhabited, and I will get a workman this afternoon to transfer two windows from there to replace those which have been blown out here." That was the first of many air raids, but the old man never showed a tremor of apprehension or allowed anything to interfere with his attention to our well-being.

General Varela started his Toledo campaign with some eight thousand men of the Tercio, as the Spanish Legion is called, and with about six thousand Regulares or Moors and two or three thousand artillery and other troops. They were divided into a variable number of columns commanded by such men as Colonel Yague, Colonel Asensio, Lieutenant-Colonels the Duque de Tella, Barron, Delgado and Majors Castejon and Mizzian. They were all fine soldiers and all of them exceedingly friendly. The last-named, Major Mizzian, was a Moroccan who had passed through the cadet school of Toledo and was one of the first to enter both Toledo and Madrid. During the long campaign the banderas of the Legion and the tabors of the Regulares were replenished several times over. But the influence of the few old soldiers who were left and of the survivors among the officers and sergeants was so powerful that General Varela assured me he had never noticed any decrease in the fighting and tactical value of these regiments.

Throughout the war none of these men were ever called upon to march a mile except when actively engaged in fighting. They were carried by motor-lorries and motor

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omnibuses right up to the limit of effective machine-gun range, and there and there only they began to move forward on foot. The result was that the units were kept in a much fresher condition than would have otherwise been the case. The Legion and the Moors also kept very attenuated outpost lines, and the great majority of the men were thus able to live in greater comfort some distance behind the rather elastic front line.

The first night at Talavera, my French friend and myself spent as the guests of the good people on whom we had been quartered by the *alcalde*. I learnt that they were his cousins. They were installed in a strange, rambling house built over a brewery and an ice factory, those being their property. We had some iced beer which was very welcome and were then invited to dine with them. The family consisted of the husband, the wife, who looked very sad and worried, and three good-looking daughters. I understand that the husband had been forced to pay to the Reds as much as £3,000 so that his property should not be destroyed and he or his family molested. During the whole period of Red occupation he made beer and ice for them for nothing. My French friend d'Hospital, who was always the president of our little mess, produced some bottles of fair Spanish wine, which were much appreciated as none was left in the town.

We were seated at table finishing our meal about midnight—dinner is always a late function in Spain—when there arose fearful shouts from the streets. It was the war chant of the Moorish soldiers, broken by the screams of frightened women. I realised how deeply fear had bitten into those Spanish families when I saw wife and children huddle in a corner of the room while

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the father went round to inspect doors and shutters. We knew it was only the passage of a Moorish regiment, and d'Hospital who, having commanded a French Moorish company, knew their ways, offered to go out and see what happened. He did so, and soon returned with one of the Spanish officers of the Moorish unit who reassured everybody and told them that they had no more devoted defenders than the Moorish Regulares. I had a nice clean room in a modern wing of the building, a room which I often regretted. There was a bath attached, but as the water was not running it did not serve me much.

The next morning we started out very early, Antoine, our chauffeur, grumbling loudly about his room, which had apparently not been as clean as ours. We obtained a pass from Lieutenant-Colonel Peris de Vargas to go to the headquarters of Colonel Yague's column, which was supposed to be somewhere near Torrijos on the straight road between Maqueda and Toledo. We drove as fast as the repeated stragglers and Civil Guard posts would allow us.

It was indeed necessary to drive fast. The September sun in the Tagus valley beats down fiercely for many hours a day, and the road all the way to Maqueda was strewn with bodies. The Reds had had several lines of trenches, well defended with barbed wire belts and machine-gun pits, neatly concealed in the olive groves regularly every five miles or so. These trenches had been defended, and then when they had been turned or pierced all their occupants—foolish, misguided men, ignorant of the very alphabet of military tactics—had rushed to the main road hoping to find their motor transport which would carry them to the rear. The transport was never

there, and the rolling contours of the road, now dipping and now rising in a gentle swell, were covered by the Nationalist machine-guns. The desperate fugitives crowded into the ditches on either side of the road and there they were shot down in their hundreds. In some places they were piled one on top of the other. Elsewhere they lay in a continuous row, head touching feet, for hundreds of yards. In the fields the peasants, who still remained, a mere handful of scared old men and women, had pulled them from the middle of the fields and had laid them in neat piles in the field tracks. The stench from these rotting bodies was sickening, and the ghastly spectacle lasted for some twenty miles. Here and there I saw dead mules and horses, but these were few and far between as neither Reds nor Nationalists, save in exceptional cases, used much horse or mule transport. Lorries and cars, some merely broken down and stripped of their wheels, some shot to pieces, and the majority burnt out, were the transport skeletons of the Spanish Civil War.

At one road crossing there was a Red armoured car, a rough-and-ready thing, made in some iron factory of Madrid and bearing the sickle and hammer to show its origin. There were five dead men around it. They were all black in the face and their bodies were twisted and set in their agony. One man had apparently been trying to leave the car and was caught up by the hinge which still held his body-strap, holding him suspended half in and half out of the door. The story of what had taken place was simple. The armoured car had stormed up the side road leading three others to try to cut off a *bandera* of the Legion advancing to capture Santa Ollala. The legionaries had stepped back behind hedges and



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hidden in ditches until the car was level with them, when they assailed it with their bombs. As soon as these had exploded three men rushed up to it behind. The Red officer in charge opened the trap-door for a second to see what had happened, and three bombs were thrown into the ungainly steel-clad vehicle. There was a terrible rush to leave the car before the bombs exploded, and all those who got out were shot down at once. The man half in and half out of the armoured car, as well as one man whose body was invisible inside, were killed by the bombs exploding.

At Santa Ollala I found the village very badly damaged. Immediately after it had been captured by the Nationalists, Red 'planes had come and bombed it. Antoine, searching round, found an alley-way in which the houses on either side had collapsed over two cars which had evidently been taken there by their chauffeurs who believed they would be safer in the narrow, confined space. Antoine was busy digging away to reach the cars, in his perpetual search for spare parts, when I pointed out to him two things. Firstly, that the dead bodies of the drivers were still in the front seats crushed under a ton and a half of stone and bricks and, secondly, that the position was just the one which he himself invariably chose when the alarm of an air raid was given. These remarks cooled his ardour, and when I had made my necessary inquiries I found him back in his seat waiting to drive on, and had not, as usual, to sound the hooter repeatedly for him. The cars and the dead bodies remained for over five weeks. The same could be said of all the bodies lying along the road and the other bodies which were to strew the road first to Toledo and then to Madrid.

I questioned many staff officers as to why bodies were not burnt or buried quicker, pointing out that at any moment it was bad for the hygiene and morale of the troops, but especially so during the hot Spanish September weather. They replied, and I quickly realised their answer was true, that they had no spare labour to set aside for the job of grave digging or of otherwise disposing of corpses. The peasants who turned up were few and mostly aged, and the work could not be imposed on them. Able-bodied town labour, which was very scarce, was being impressed as fast as possible for the vitally necessary work of building aerodromes. When finally the work of getting rid of the corpses began it was a ghastly sight to see the funeral pyres lit all over the country for miles and miles round. A special corps of men, assigned to the task for some breach of discipline or other, equipped with masks and great rubber gauntlets, pulled the bodies into heaps and, covering them with straw and pitch from the stock used for road repairing, made gigantic bonfires of them. They smouldered rather than burned, and for days one could see thin and evil-smelling wisps of smoke rising from blackened heaps every fifty yards or so along the roadway. Just approaching Torrijos, there were the bodies of two enormous pigs. I have never seen hogs quite as big. They lay there, an abomination to the nose for three weeks. When they were set on fire they burnt with a great white flame, cracking and exploding every now and then, until one could see the incandescent glow and the flames roaring inside the cage formed by their rib bones. Not far distant a peasant's cart harnessed to two black horses had come to grief just before the Guadarrama river on the road to Toledo. The dead peasants were buried quickly, owing to local piety and

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the friendly hand of some neighbour. One horse was half in the field and was burnt. The other horse remained in the road. First it was a black form clearly identifiable, and then gradually, owing to the heat which made it rot fast, and owing to the constant passage of motor lorries, it lost shape and flattened out. When I last saw it, one could only see a dark mark deeply encrusted in the road, all that was left of the dead horse. The peasant must have been proud of his pair of black horses, but he too was dead and was not there to grieve over their sad fate.

On a little hill to the left of the road going to Torrijos first, and then ultimately to Toledo, I saw a number of artillery officers taking observations with an escort of Moorish cavalry. They all received me exceedingly well, and while the artillery officers were pointing out the Red positions the Moors hurried off to brew me some mint tea. I was surprised to find out for the first time that the Reds were so near us, and when I remembered the battery of short-range four-inch guns which was standing at Maqueda, one half firing towards the foothills of the Gredos and the others up the continuation of the Talavera road towards Madrid, I began to marvel at the risks which were being taken. I was shown the little road which comes from Santa Cruz de Retamar and also runs towards the Guadarrama river, and was told that all those villages were Red. They were actually only captured weeks after the fall of Toledo, and yet they were no more than some five thousand yards distant on our flank. That was why, I was told, the artillery observation officers and every head of a column moved with a cavalry escort, and that was also why all the stores were brought up in protected convoys.

My mint tea was by now brought to me in a very grimy

glass which had most likely been used by all the men of the escort, but I knew that my duty was to drink it down, regardless of consequences, and therefore I acquitted myself in a manner to draw the approval of the very dignified Moorish troop sergeant. I must take this opportunity of saying that I have seen the Spanish Moorish troops at close quarters for many months, and I have never seen or heard the slightest evidence which supports wild charges of cruelty made against them. Undoubtedly in battle they are ferocious and they kill the enemy who opposes them. They do not often take prisoners, but no body of men in an actual fight is obliged by the normal rules and customs of war to accept a prisoner. Once men have been taken prisoners the Moors, so far as I have heard, have never massacred them or even molested them. Women and children also have never suffered from them. As far as this is concerned and as to their general demeanour, I have found the Moorish soldiers great gentlemen. On the other hand, it must be admitted that they loot. If they find empty houses they make the easy excuse that the vanished inhabitants must be Reds and so they take everything they can find which they like. But they do not destroy property of any kind uselessly. I was told that they objected to the method of warfare necessitated in the University city by which certain houses were set on fire to force the Reds to leave. They thought that to be a useless destruction of valuable property. This line of conduct has caused them to hate the Reds who have been guilty of wanton destruction. Another thing for which they cannot forgive the Reds has been the destruction of churches and Church property. "That is their faith," they say, "and yet these miscreants do not hesitate to commit sacrilege. It is as if we were to set fire to a

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mosque. It is certainly Allah's wish that we punish them." The Spanish Moors are already deeply attached, first to the Spanish Army and then to their own regimental officers, of whom they are exceedingly proud, and if anything could have strengthened that attachment it is the fact that the Reds against whom they are fighting have burnt and murdered so brutally.

I was told that General Varela was in Torrijos but that I could not go there until I had a special permit, and I was promised that one would be sent back to Talavera for me on the morrow. The car was turned round, and Antoine, not reassured by what he had seen, which he, as a French reservist, was too good a soldier not to understand, started back at breakneck speed for Talavera de la Reina. On account of the ghastly succession of corpses this speed would have been welcome, but there were shell holes and mine craters to be considered, so that it was necessary to tell him to drive more slowly. "That is all very well," was his reply, "but the Reds are on both sides, and if they have any sense they will try and cut the road at night and hold up the supply train." Fortunately for us the Reds apparently did not have much sense, and as a matter of fact the road was only twice cut, and that long after Toledo had fallen, and the Reds each time had apparently lost their way and did not know where they were going. They did damage, however, and got away, so it is easy to imagine the harm they might have done had they had good and energetic leaders.

Next morning we started off again and reached Torrijos, a big, straggling village of New Castile, with immense farm buildings and a dozen private houses of some pretensions. We followed the road until we came up with General Varela and his advance guard at a hamlet known

as Rielves. We were by then half a dozen journalists, including a cinema operator, a charming American named Menken. I pitied him when I saw the weight he was carrying through the almost tropical heat.

On the sky-line, limned by the scorching sun, were the church towers of Bargas. That village was Red and to-day it was only to be masked and not taken. Actually, though it stood there so near and so plainly visible, it was not taken until after Toledo had been captured, and then only as a preliminary to the march on to Madrid along the Toledo-Madrid road.

There were batteries of heavy and light artillery firing against the Reds on either side of the road. They were not firing fast, but continuously, and made quite a warlike racket. It was evident their shells were falling on the great red sandstone bluff marking the opposite bank of the Guadarrama river, which flows into the Tagus a few miles farther west. The course of the river could be guessed by the line of green poplars lazily nodding their heads in the breeze. Through glasses it was impossible to detect any trace of the Reds, though it seemed strange that they should leave so valuable a line of defence as a ravined stream without artillery and machine-gun fire beating on it. At two o'clock in the afternoon the sign was given by General Varela for his staff to advance down to the line of the river. The General, with Colonel Asensio and two staff officers, climbed on to the back of an armoured lorry which set off at full speed, and we, who were under the charge of the indefatigable Captain Aguilera, were told to spread out into infantry formation in the ploughed fields on the road, at least until we had passed the crest of the hill and were on the down slope to the river.

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I was still feeling the strain of the motor-car accident which I related earlier, and I found the going across ploughed fields for some five thousand yards very heavy. Everything comes to an end, however, and after an hour and a half's trudging we reached the bank of the Guadarama. The Reds had blown up the central arch of the high bridge which crosses the wide bed of the river. Fortunately, as in so many Spanish *rios*, there was not very much water. Taking our boots off, we found we could get across without the water reaching higher than our knees. The stream was deliciously cool and we all felt the benefit of our wade. When we got across, however, it was not to catch a sight of Toledo, though that city was only fourteen thousand yards distant. The Nationalists could not understand the complete absence of pugnacity on the part of the Reds, and orders were given that until a satisfactory military bridge had been made across the river bed, one which would take tanks and heavy artillery, the infantry was to confine itself to holding the bridge-head, digging itself in, and organising positions which could be held against any counter-offensive the Reds might make in the form of a desperate sortie from Toledo.

General Varela himself and his staff were soon back on the north side of the river, and at that moment the Red 'planes put in an appearance. About four hundred men were then at work digging new road approaches to the river, while motor-lorries were being brought up carrying timber for the passage-way which was to be made right down at water-level. Whistles sounded and there was a *saute qui peut*. The General and most of his staff took shelter under one of the arches still erect of the bridge. Not bad, but still not very good. Many of the men simply

waded into the rushes and stood still. That was perhaps the best, as a bomb falling in the river would have a very localised influence. I found a small ditch, almost shaped like a grave, which was some five feet deep, and that made an excellent, indeed an ideal, shelter for myself and three companions. Those Red 'planes flew over us in pairs continuously for about three hours and dropped, according to staff calculations, some one hundred and seventy light and heavy bombs. It was an unpleasant experience, but in my little "grave" I felt secure from anything but that most unlikely thing, a direct hit.

Night was falling when finally they dropped their last bombs and flew away. Ambulances were speeding up the road, and the dead and dying were being carried away. Not a heavy casualty list, I was told, only ten dead and twenty-five wounded for all that noise and all those 'planes. The General and his staff were safe, as not a single bomb had hit the already wrecked bridge. Sensible Antoine, when he knew we had reached the Guadarrama bridge, had nosed forward cautiously with the car. My friend d'Hospital's chauffeur had followed suit. The air raids had kept them back for a little, but when dusk began to fall they had again pushed forward and, leaving the river, we were hailed by them and both felt grateful to our men for their initiative, as we had thought we would have to walk back as far as we had come. In Torrijos we had fixed on some local legal luminary's house as our headquarters, and there we wrote our messages. D'Hospital, seeing that I was tired out and knowing how the terrible condition of the road as far as Maqueda hurt my back, offered to take my messages to Talavera for me, "on condition," he said, "that you see I have a good dinner when I return."



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The first thing I felt I wanted was a wash, but I could not find any water. Menken, the cinema operator, took me in tow, however, like the good fellow he is, and soon we were knocking at the great double doors of a large house in a side street. A fat but dignified old Spanish lady answered, and when we told her what we wanted led us along a great passage into an immense whitewashed room. The walls were hung with pictures of Saints and Biblical subjects, and side by side stood two huge four-poster beds with great black twisted columns. In the corner was an exiguous wash basin, but there was plenty of fresh water, and as I had soap and a towel we had a great wash. The good lady trotted in and out despite Menken's half-hearted attempt to shut the door. She told us that she and her two sisters were all the adults left of the family. Two daughters had been killed after suffering all sorts of indignities—we thought it better not to inquire what these were—and the four men of the house had also been killed. "We are three old women, now," she said, "and we have eleven small children to look after. How can we do it?" And out in the patio and in the corridor sure enough there was a crowd of laughing, crying children, many of them just big enough to hang to her generously proportioned apron, as she showed us to the door, having given us a great stone flask of wine as well as a pitcher of fresh well water.

In the house we had picked, we decided to eat in the large dining-room where there was a big, heavy, black oak table and a number of tall black chairs upholstered in worked leather. There were no spoons or forks, but plenty of plates and glasses, most of which on a cursory examination appeared to be clean. Four candles stuck in bottles gave sufficient light, and we were just beginning to open

our pocket knives and compare the tinned provisions we had brought with us—Knickerbocker of the *New York American* always had the most handsome supplies and always generously shared them—when there was a tap on the door and a Spanish Legion sergeant appeared. “I see, *caballeros*,” he said after a preliminary salute, “that you are preparing to have dinner here. Tinned food is but cold comfort after the tiring day that you have had, and I would like to ask you to be the guests of the Legion for dinner to-night. If you would but wait half an hour or so, while our soup, which is even now on our camp fire, cooks, we will serve you dinner.”

We had a little sherry, and just as d’Hospital arrived back from his journey to the telegraph office the Legionaries served us dinner. They brought in soup in a great covered tureen. It was thick and hot and good. When that was finished we had a typical Spanish stew of potatoes, beans and cabbage with little pieces of sausage and meat. It appeared that many hen roosts had been raided, but the chicken in the stew was not of the tenderest. Then came tinned tunny with a salad of red and green sweet chillies, and finally roast pork. The pork, too, was not very tender though well roasted. But as the piglets had been running about that very morning it was not surprising that the meat was slightly tough. With apologies for having no sweet the Legion waiters brought us in some piping hot coffee. I knew we could not offer to pay them for their good services, for the Spanish Legion, like the French, is very touchy on such matters, so we merely invited the Spanish sergeant and his helpers to take a glass of sherry with us, and after thanking them drank to “Spain and the Legion.” They were delighted.

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There were no good sleeping arrangements, merely empty beds with wire mattresses, and at first Reynolds Packard, the American journalist and correspondent of the United Press, and myself decided to wrap up in our blankets and sleep in the open. M. d'Hospital curled up in his car which closed well. My own was occupied by our two chauffeurs, while Knickerbocker and the others chose the mattresses.

It was a picturesque night setting. Occasionally from the distance a deep boom spoke of some guns firing miles away, possibly against the Alcazar, or the rattle of a machine-gun much nearer told of some movement in the enemy outpost line which had called for a sharp retort from the Nationalist posts on the Rio Guadarrama. A few yards away in the middle of the street a great camp fire was burning, and sitting or sleeping round it were the men of the Legion's main guard on the village, some fifty in number. Every hour a sergeant would call out some names and men would rise quietly, wrap themselves in their cloaks and, rifle in hand, vanish for a patrol or for some sentry post. In another house near by there was another section of the Legion who were gently singing Andalusian songs. Overhead the stars gleamed bright.

Reynolds Packard and myself found sleep difficult, and for a long time we remained awake exchanging reminiscences, and then suddenly we heard the piercing notes of the Spanish reveille and awoke to find it dawn.

Again that day we went to the front line across the Guadarrama. This time we found that a good causeway had been picketed across the river. Piles had been driven into the sand and boards closely hammered into position so that traffic could get across safely if not with ease. But

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General Varela felt he had still another day he could spare, and was bringing up his reinforcements, guarding his flanks, and placing his batteries in position. Red 'planes came again at intervals during the day, but Nationalist chasers were in the air and they were not so persistent as they had been on the day before.

So great was the secrecy observed at this moment by the Nationalist High Command that there were many of us who wondered if the assault which was being planned would come in time to relieve Moscardo. The Alcazar, we knew, had been closely beset since July 23, and it was now September 24. The Reds had repeatedly announced the fall of the great fortress palace which they had battered with heavy artillery and mined from different sides. Only two days before they had again given out this report with such a wealth of circumstantial detail that it almost seemed as if, for once, their story might be true. A priest had visited the Alcazar, and after his spiritual help had presented once again the Red request that a surrender might at least save the lives of women and children. A diplomat, almost sick with horror at the sights he saw, had joined his appeal, but the women of the Alcazar, fit companions of the gallant officers and soldiers who were by their sides, had given a point-blank refusal to any negotiations for their surrender or their release, saying, "We will live or die with the garrison of the Alcazar." What was their fate? Red 'planes, we knew, had during the past three days dropped two bombs on the palace for every one they had dropped on the relief force. Was anybody left alive in the Alcazar? Would General Varela arrive in time?

At last on the Friday we were able to move forward, marching with the very first line of the Moorish tabors

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to a point where we could actually see the roofs of Toledo rising in the thin river mist before us, and view the Alcazar itself.

I shall never forget that first sight of Toledo. We went forward along a broad mule-track which ran between two stubble fields. The banks were still green, and a tiny pale purple flower—I could not remember its name—was growing in profusion. On either side of us were batteries, and overhead Red 'planes and Nationalist 'planes were having a dog-fight. From time to time Red bombers would appear, and then to the sound of a whistle every one would flatten himself down on the ground and remain motionless. The theory, right or wrong, was that motionless figures even in line could not be detected at the height at which the bombers flew, whereas the slightest motion would at once betray both the Nationalist line of infantry and its batteries. There was nothing to be done but to obey orders, hide one's face in the stubble, and watch the spiders and the ants fight for the body of a disabled caterpillar. Finally we were allowed up again, and cautiously two at a time to move forward to where the Moors were lying in rough-made trenches—the front line—looking down on Toledo

There was the town, with a cloud of smoke hanging over it like a canopy. There was the Tagus almost surrounding it, there its walls, and there the towers of the cathedral. Where, however, the huge square-built Alcazar with its great towers, its great façade? Could it be that? That smoking heap of ruins? Yes, that was all there was left of the Alcazar. Gone were the proud towers, gone the great roof supported by the huge façade and lateral walls. Gone the noble façade and the walls themselves. Here and there a shaft of masonry raised

itself from that immense heap of rubble and of stones. And so we watched, straining our eyes to catch a sight of the red and gold flag which would tell us that Colonel Moscardo, its gallant defender, and his garrison were still holding out, but there was nothing we could see. Suddenly, in front of the Alcazar there rose an immense column of smoke and dust which went up like a huge plume for some hundreds of feet in the air and then slowly, ever so slowly, spread out so that it looked like a gigantic inverted pyramid of fuliginous smoke. A great boom resounded, and we knew that yet another mine had been exploded. That meant that the Alcazar until then was still resisting. But what damage had the mine done? Was it not, perhaps, the last blow, which would have shattered the walls of the cellars in which the gallant garrison had taken refuge, and would have forced a breach through which the Red hordes might find a way to wreak their bloody purpose?

Sadly we turned away and in gloomy reflection began to make our way back. It needed an incident when we reached the six-inch batteries beside the sunken road to relieve us of our pessimistic impressions. We were moving along, a little column of journalists, when suddenly the battery opened fire, directly over our heads. Most of us ducked instinctively—even those accustomed to artillery fire cannot always refrain from so doing—but behind us we saw a half a dozen visitors to the front who had done more and who had thrown themselves flat on their faces in the mud. We did not laugh at the moment, so as not to offend them, but having assured them there was no danger, hastened away round a corner to enjoy the humour of the situation, leaving them to brush the abundant mud from their clothes.

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The next day there was better news, and in our billet at Torrijos, which, though the village had been swept and cleaned, was none the more comfortable for a sudden plague of flies—whence had they come, those flies?—we were told by officers back from the front that Toledo was almost surrounded, and that Moorish troops, who were closing on the famous Visagra gate, built in 1550 and still a formidable work, declared they had seen a flag wave from the top of the immense “glacis” of brick and rubble which marked where once the entry to the Alcazar had been. Later that night other messengers came back and said that light signals had been exchanged and that the garrison, which knew the relief force was at hand, was holding out and did not fear a surprise attack.

General Varela, seated in a farmhouse, was that night examining two Red deserters. They had come in to surrender and had said they could tell the general exactly where the Red batteries were situated, and also where their barricades were being erected to prevent the Nationalists entering the town. The general was seated at a table, lit only by two guttering candles, as he interrogated the men. A staff officer marked down the result of their replies on a large-scale map, and General Varela, warning the men that if their statements were not true in every respect, they would be shot, made them repeat time after time what they had said. The men swore they were not Reds but had been pressed to fight. As the information they brought tallied to a large degree with other news the general had, they were dismissed under guard, and then and there General Varela dictated his orders for the next day's assault on the town. Three columns were to make the assault, and one column was to guard the left flank which led to Madrid and from which

direction the Reds might make an eleventh hour attempt to retrieve the situation. The general knew that once his troops were in the town the Reds would be pouring away over the Alcantara and St. Martin bridges as fast as they could go.

On Sunday morning the attacking columns swept forward. They had to carry several heavily fortified positions first, on the Madrid road the cemetery which, standing on a slope, dominates the road for two thousand yards. Then there was the bull-ring, the infantry barracks, and the Tavera hospital. Some three thousand Reds, plentifully supplied with machine-guns and rifles, held these positions. Legionaries and Moors pushed along in open formation, while the Nationalist artillery drenched the Red positions with shells. At noon the cemetery was taken—I saw it a day later, and there was a fresh body for every tomb—and at three in the afternoon the Tavera hospital was burning. Three hundred Reds had shut themselves in the huge building, and it was not until twenty-four hours later that this last redoubt was finally stormed. The Alcazar had, however, already been relieved.

The portion of the old wall of Toledo attacked was that between the new Visagra gate and the Cambron gate. The two narrow winding gateways were barricaded and commanded by machine-gun fire from the stone houses within. But the Moors and Legionaries scorned the low and somewhat tumbledown walls, and with improvised scaling ladders, torn from the houses and gardens of the suburbs, they climbed the outer defences at a score of places at the same time and then began to sweep the barricades and houses clear. The next day, on the road rising from the Visagra gate to the Puerta del Sol, I saw one house



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which had served as a Red redoubt. Its doors and windows were breached by hand-grenades and a dozen ragged, bloody corpses lay in all positions, their hands clenched as death had met them from fierce bayonet thrust or speedier bullet. In that first rush no surrenders were accepted, and the Reds were shot down, bombed, or bayoneted without mercy. It was growing dusk, and only half the city had been taken, and the heads of columns which had forced their entrance had to strike hard and fast. As they climbed the walls an officer of the Legion told me that high up on a shattered shaft of wall, all that was left of the south façade of the Alcazar, they could see a figure wave a great red and gold banner and then disappear.

A small party of Moors led by an officer and a detachment of Legionaries were the first to climb the glacis and present themselves before the barricade leading to the interior of the Alcazar. They were received with military precautions. Half-way up they were challenged and only three men were allowed to proceed. It was then nearly dusk, and in that narrow street with its canopy of smoke and dust it was difficult to see. The officer and two men stumbled upwards to the rude barricade of stone and sandbags where the black muzzles of two machine-guns peered through. They were welcomed by a grey-faced, bearded man who said he was the officer of the watch, and then Colonel Moscardo, the gallant chief, himself appeared, gaunt and ghost-like, with his grey beard and his torn uniform. Military recognition having thus been obtained, the two hundred men of the relief force filed in. They were duly taken round from post to post to relieve the tired garrison, and that night, the 27th of September, for the first time in seventy days, the whole garrison of

the Alcazar was able to sleep. All, they say, save Colonel Moscardo, who, still conscious of his supreme responsibility, went round his posts hour after hour or sat in his wrecked headquarters office near the library and received reports of the isolated street fighting still going on.

When I entered the city not long after dawn I was at first surprised to see that so much of it was intact, but as I came out of the cold shadow of the great Puerta del Sol and saw the famous Zocodover place in front of me I realised that all the fighting had been concentrated in that one central spot, where the heart of Nationalist Spain was beating. The convent of the Santa Cruz on my left was riddled by shot and shell; of the Military Governor's palace, once held by Colonel Moscardo and his garrison, there was nothing left but a pile of stones, of all the left side of the Zocodover nothing but stones and rubble. Cervantes Inn had disappeared, and so had the colonnade. But there in front was the Alcazar. Here and there a piece of wall appeared to sway in the sky, broken away from all buttress or support, but still standing. The little street which led along the southern façade had gone, and gone also were the houses which abutted on it. The main façade was impossible to reach owing to a huge and gaping mine crater, littered with corpses. Following my military guides, I climbed the huge slope of rubble, fully one hundred yards long, which led up the hill to the battle entrance to the Alcazar, all the others having been blown down and rendered impracticable. There were enormous masses of masonry which must have weighed many tons, and it was necessary to use both hands to pull oneself from one great fallen mass to another. Here and there unexploded hand grenades could be seen, and so caution was necessary. Every now and then there would

be a crash of rifle fire from lower in the town, which indicated that another "nest" of Reds had been found and was being destroyed. Some Red desperadoes held out and fired from roofs at night for days after the city was captured. Then we went past the barricade and entered the central courtyard of the great building. Once more a tangled mass of iron girders and fallen masonry with—still intact, though not on its pedestal—the steel-clad statue of the founder of the modern Alcazar, Charles the Fifth.

There, for the first time, I saw the garrison of the Alcazar. They looked like figures taken from some mystic picture by El Greco. They had that ghostly pale-green colour, that gaunt expression and that far-away mysterious look in the eye which the great Spanish painter alone excelled in. One hardly expected to hear them talk or see them move. Though they had been relieved for over twelve hours not one of them laughed or smiled. No, that is not right. For there, coming up those great stone steps from the vaults where all of them have lived so long, is a girlish figure. Golden hair, blue eyes, and a lissom figure in a stained and torn silk dress. No stockings to hide grime-covered legs, and feet thrust into a pair of boy's tattered canvas slippers. Carmen, as I learnt her name was, daughter of the Intendant of the Alcazar, was laughing. Her head thrown back, she was laughing, not hysterically, but spontaneously. "I have come to take the sun," she said to me; "it is so long since I have seen the sun," and she held my officer escort and myself tightly by the hand as if she were afraid we might disappear and that it might all be a dream. She was a girl of twenty-five, but she appeared to us like a daughter of twelve, and we felt the moment very poignant. Never have I seen a beautiful girl so grimy. "We have had for the past sixty

days," she exclaimed with something like a pout, as she must have read our thoughts, "less than a quart of water a day. In the oppressive heat of August and September it was not enough to quench one's thirst, and we were never able to wash. Only the wounded had a double ration, and the surgeons for their necessities."

And it was true that after the feeling of reverence which that gallant garrison inspired, after the horror felt at the ruins piled around one, the most striking impression was that of the stench and the filth.

"We tried to keep clean," Carmen said as she took us down the great steps to the subterranean galleries which ran foursquare below, "but it was so difficult. I used to sweep these steps every day. It was part of my duty, for we all had to work, but they were as dirty again an hour later. Shells and mines and explosions sent all the dirt back again." Officers told me later that every day bodies of Reds interred outside or merely lying on the glacis would be blown up by shell or grenade and masses of putrefaction would fall all over the place. "We tried to clean it up without the women seeing it," one told me, "and towards the end that was easy, as they were never allowed to come up into the light as the rain of bullets and shell splinters was continuous.

Carmen showed us the infirmary, she showed us where the little mill, worked by the engine from a motor-cycle, ground their scanty stock of grain, and she showed us the stable where stood four gaunt mules and a thoroughbred mare. "It was touch and go," I said, pointing to the mules; "you had only five days' more food." She took us both by the hand again and led us farther along the gallery to a corner where, with one tiny light in a purple lamp glimmering before it, there stood, pale blue and

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white, a statue of the Holy Virgin. "Nuestra Señora de' Alcazar," she murmured. "We prayed to her here every day for her intercession, and we knew that nothing could happen to us."

I learnt that the scanty stock of food, just enough to keep body and soul together, was obtained through the prescience of Colonel Moscardo. After sending down to the arms factory in the suburbs on the first days for some five million cartridges and all the available rifles and machine-guns, he ordered a sortie which entered and held for six days the military stores offices beyond the Military Governor's palace. That time was spent in bringing in all the grain his men could lay hands on. When that was done, the building was blown up so as not to leave an entrance, and the garrison had a stock of food just sufficient for two months. Actually, it lasted for seventy days, and there was still a sack of grain or so over, but there were not so many mouths to feed at the end as at the beginning.

Carmen then showed us the library where, until the last fortnight, that historic newspaper *El Alcazar* was edited, printed, and published. "Printed" is not the word as it was merely cyclostyled. It consisted of from two to three sheets, often on one side only, the other having already been used. Most of the paper was taken from the library of examination papers and lectures set for the cadets. Three hundred copies were made of each of seventy numbers. At present, only five complete sets are known to exist, and two of these belong to the Spanish State. The news contained was mainly from the wireless broadcasts. A small set was all that was available with earphones and no loud speaker. Orders issued to the garrison appeared in an official column, as well as an

astonishing list of articles lost or found. The colonel's office served as lost property office.

The lack of light was one thing which troubled the garrison most, as petrol having given out, except that left to run the flour mill, they were obliged to manufacture little lamps with wicks fed by the fat from the horses and mules killed for food. During the siege, 124 horses and mules were eaten and 300 sacks of grain. There was a stock of luxury tinned goods, ham, and so on, but this was all exclusively reserved at first for the women and wounded. When the women insisted on sharing the same rough food as the men, however, it was all kept for the infirmary and for the youngest of the children.

We wanted Carmen to leave the Alcazar and lunch with us in the town, but she only consented to come as far as the terrace and there, having told us how happy she was to have spoken to somebody from the outside world, she refused to come any farther. "Not till I have a new dress and stockings," she said, "and then only at night, for I must not disgrace our Alcazar by appearing ragged and dirty." And so, with a laugh and blowing us a kiss, she ran back to that Alcazar where she had played as a little girl and suffered and wept as a young woman.

I then visited the great mine crater: it was the mine we had seen explode when visiting the front lines barely three days before. It was very large, but its lip only reached the edge of the outer wall. It was deep enough, and had it been pierced another twenty yards it would have blown down the outer wall of the two levels of underground galleries.

What, then, would have happened to the unfortunate garrison? Half, perhaps, would have been killed or asphyxiated by the explosion; and could the others have

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held out? It is doubtful, though with such men there is no limit to heroism. The mine had apparently been exploded prematurely either by accident or from some sudden panic, and the Reds, working at digging a sap which was to have led to the crater, were taken by surprise. Their bodies could be seen everywhere. Men were busy with ropes pulling them out, and on the edge there were already two score bodies laid out in a row. The Alcazar had taken its due toll of those who wished to profane it.

I was told many stories of the siege. But there is one which must be repeated every time the Alcazar is mentioned; it is a story which will go down in history as long as heroism and sheer devotion to duty are honoured by mankind. The story, which I had heard briefly already, was told me by a young artillery officer whose long, shaggy black beard and deep-sunken, luminous eyes were eloquent testimony of his ten weeks of fighting and starvation.

He said: "In the early days of the siege the Red commander at Toledo called up Colonel Moscardo on the telephone, which had not yet been severed, and told him: 'We are going to let your eighteen-year-old son, who is our prisoner, speak to you. Unless you surrender, we will shoot him at once.' A moment later, the Colonel heard the voice of his young son saying, 'Father, it is I. What do you want me to do?'"

"Then in a brave voice, though those few who were by him at that tragic moment say that he grew white with a pallor which has never left his face, Colonel Moscardo replied: 'I order you in the name of God to call out, "Long live Spain; long live the Christ King," and then die like a hero. Your father will never surrender.' It is understood that the boy was killed almost immediately afterwards."

I may add here, as the most suitable place, that the Nationalists, though they have been accused of severity and though often they have been severe and wholesale in their punishments, early in the war captured the son of Largo Caballero, one of their principal enemies. The young man is just the age that young Moscardo was, but he has not been shot and will not be shot.

I was told that towards the end of the siege the surgeons ran short of chloroform, and eventually amputations had to be performed without anaesthetics. Often the men underwent it with extreme bravery, but it told on the nerves of the surgeons, who never before had been reduced to such extremities and who hardly remembered the different technique necessary.

The principal duties, except when there were assaults, were to keep watch for three things. These were, first, shell fire, so that all those exposed should take shelter. An artillery officer was always on duty watching the big batteries with glasses so as to detect when they were about to fire. The second was the guard watch against the attempt of any small party to rush the place by surprise. Once, and once only, immediately after a fierce bombardment, the Reds did manage for a few seconds to set foot on the top of one barricade. They threw hand-grenades, killing a major of Civil Guards, one lieutenant and two men, and wounding fifty. The reason there were so many casualties is that one company of the garrison was drawn up to relieve the posts which had undergone the bombardment. The Reds were all shot down and bayoneted, and the machine-guns dealt with the main body which, at that moment, was swarming up the glacis. From that time on no body of men was ever drawn up in the square, but all the designations of posts and duties were carried



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out in small groups down below, under the protection of the massive stone vaults more than twelve feet thick. The third and most unwelcome task was that of the engineers and their volunteer assistants who, down in the deepest underground saps, listened for the sounds of the enemy miners. From calculations made by the engineers, those portions of the outworks which were menaced were most often evacuated in time. But this gallant little band suffered heavily. Frequently it had to ask for fresh volunteers, and they were always forthcoming.

The following tables of official figures given me by the Garrison Adjutant himself is a document which reveals the stark reality of the siege better than anything else.

Siege, July 21 to July 28	.	.	.	70 days
Guns fired against the Alcazar				
15.5 mm. in Pinedo	.	.	.	2
15 5 mm. in Alijares	.	.	.	7
7.5 mm. in Pinedo and Alijares	.	.	.	7
10 5 mm in Pinedo	.	.	.	4
Rounds fired:				
15.5 mm..	.	.	.	3,300
10.5 mm.	.	.	.	3,000
7.5 mm.	.	.	.	3,500
5.0 mm. mortar	.	.	.	2,000
Hand-grenades thrown	.	.	.	1,500
Dynamite bombs thrown	.	.	.	2,000
Attempts at a general assault	.	.	.	8
Attacks by aircraft	.	.	.	30
Bombs dropped by war 'planes	.	.	.	500
Gas and petrol canisters dropped	.	.	.	35
Inflammable liquid containers dropped	.	.	.	200
Fires caused by bombs and gunfire	.	.	.	10

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Big mines fired . . . . .	2
Small mines fired . . . . .	2
Maximum number of 155 mm. shells fired in a day . . . . .	472
Combatant men . . . . .	1,100
Killed . . . . .	82
Wounded . . . . .	430
Slightly wounded . . . . .	150
Disappeared in explosions, presumed dead	57
Deserted or disappeared . . . . .	30
Died natural death . . . . .	5
Suicides . . . . .	3
Total casualties, 59 per cent.	
Officers killed, 23 per cent.	
Women inside Alcazar . . . . .	520
Children inside Alcazar . . . . .	50
Casualties to women and children . . . . .	None
Natural deaths. two women of over 70 years of age.	
Births: one boy, one girl.	

As I have already said, the rest of Toledo was little damaged. Beautiful stained-glass windows of the cathedral had been smashed to pieces by the concussion of the mines and littered the floor of that beautiful edifice, crunching under feet as I visited it, together with General Franco and his staff, two days later. The treasure of the cathedral had mostly been packed up and taken away by the Reds, whether for preservation or merely as loot it was impossible to say.

Though some of the wonderful pictures were still there the majority had disappeared, especially the fine Grecos. In the treasure room, prepared for packing, I found the great monstrance of gold, diamonds, and other

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precious jewels, which stands two feet high and is one of the most precious of the sacred objects treasured there. Later I was able to visit the church of Santo Tomé, where the Burial of Count Orgaz, perhaps the most famous picture of El Greco, was still hanging safely in its chapel, having been protected from damage by a wooden scaffold stuffed with mattresses.

At the hospital, now museum of Santa Cruz, a very beautiful building, the Reds had deliberately mutilated a number of pictures and statues dating from the Gothic period and the later Middle Ages. I speak of deliberate mutilation and not of chance shots fired either by Reds or by Nationalists.

Before concluding this chapter it might be interesting to point out that the garrison which defended the Alcazar was not made up of the cadets of that famous military academy. This is due to the fact that it was the summer vacation, and most of the cadets were with their families. There were six cadets who were accidentally present, attending a summer course in engineering. The rest of the garrison was composed of Civil Guards, soldiers, and officers who happened to be in Toledo when the movement began, and civilian volunteers, including a number of members of the Spanish Falange.

Toledo had been captured and the Alcazar relieved, and the first great task which General Franco had set himself was accomplished.

FRANCO, GENERALISSIMO AND CHIEF  
OF STATE

AS soon as we had our first sight of Toledo, my colleague, Paul Bewsher, dashed back to the French frontier at three in the morning, taking with him the first news of the relief of the Alcazar. He drove back in my old damaged car with my French chauffeur, Antoine, and though the roads were bad, the hold-ups for the inspection of passports frequent, and the distance very long by circuitous mountain routes, he reached the frontier over the Vera pass and was in St. Jean de Luz on the telephone to the *Daily Mail* early in the evening. It was a great feat for a tired man, who had not been to bed for forty-eight hours and who had shared so fully the tense anxiety of the situation. It was the last I saw of Antoine as my regular chauffeur. I felt I could no longer rely on a car which had been so badly damaged, and also with regret I realised that in the changed circumstances it might be better for me to have a native Spanish chauffeur.

Talavera, despite its joy—everybody was mafficking for the relief of the Alcazar—seemed to me dull after the excitement of the past weeks, and I realised that other things must be happening and that full arrangements for the march on Madrid must be progressing elsewhere, and possibly also vital changes in the constitution of the Spanish State itself

Bewsher had started for the frontier at three in the morning, and after having written for the Eastern

Telegraph Cable from Lisbon a second and complementary message, I set out for Caceres where I knew I would find General Franco and his amiable personal secretary, Señor de Sangronis, who is now his diplomatic secretary and Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps.

I found a rather shaky Ford car for the journey, driven by a man we had often employed before as a courier. José was a little man belonging to the Falange militia but not yet mobilised owing to his age, though he wore a smart khaki uniform and carried a respectable-sized revolver. His great claim was that he knew every town where whisky could be found, and he was therefore a great favourite with Anglo-American newspapermen. We reached Caceres after a long but interesting journey. Flags were flying and bands were playing all along the route. José's little Ford carried all the patriotic emblems, and as we were speeding back from the front towards headquarters, we had an immense reception. All the way, Civil Guards and Fascists thought we were official envoys, and we were saluted and cheered in consequence. We had a hurried meal somewhere, when everybody crowded round us to hear the news—no newspapers had yet arrived—and there were more cheers and some patriotic speeches, to which a suitable reply was made, and then came the patriotic songs, for which everybody stood. People have said that the Spanish are a sad and proud race. That may be true sometimes. The first only occasionally, and the second nearly always. But after such a great patriotic victory as the relief of the Alcazar, all such national traits vanished, and all that remained were the happy feelings of a people who knew they had gained a great victory and who quite unashamedly laughed and cheered and felt relief at the fact that the

Reds with their murders and their crimes were being pushed day after day farther back.

The Civil Guard, who heard who we were, came round, not so much to look at our passes as to rejoice with everybody else at the victory. Though a frugal and disciplined corps, I have never known them before to accept a drink from strangers. This time when they heard the glad tidings of the capture of Toledo and the rescue of their comrades in the Alcazar, they made no objection but pushed their glasses forward and drank heartily with us. I may be betraying a secret in so saying, but I hope that no officer of that distinguished Spanish corps will take exception to it, and that all its members will know in what high esteem for courage and integrity it is held by foreign visitors to Spain.

Back through Navalmoral de la Mata with its memories of fights now six weeks old, and thus to headquarters at Caceres. There I saw General Franco, surrounded by his staff, who were congratulating him on his accession to supreme power. The Burgos Junta of National Defence had taken the step which for a long time had been in everybody's mind, and was withdrawing from the scene in favour of General Franco. It was from the outset obvious that a united command and a single leader were infinitely preferable to the very best efforts of a committee. War cannot be waged by a committee, however patriotic and united it may be. But General Franco himself had demanded a delay. He wished the National movement and his own arms to be consecrated by some signal victory which would gather all the people of Spain round him before accepting not only the supreme military command but also the supreme civil responsibility.

I have discussed the situation in Spain many a time,

both with General Franco and with General Mola, and I have always found that the basis of their opinions has been the vital necessity to extirpate root and branch every form of Communism or Marxism—political theories which are entirely foreign to the Spanish people and to Spanish political traditions, which are founded more on municipal freedom than on general constitutions, and which demand above all a scrupulous respect for human dignity.

General Franco was then just forty-four years of age. A man of middle height with a muscular frame, an oval Latin face, his black hair is only slightly tinged with grey, and that despite his twenty years of active campaigning in Spanish Morocco. His eyes are the most remarkable part of his physiognomy. They are typically Spanish, large and luminous with long lashes. Usually they are smiling and somewhat reflective, but I have seen them flash with decision and, though I have never witnessed it, I am told that when roused to anger they can become as cold and hard as steel. There is nothing of the *conquistador* or of the soldier of fortune or swashbuckler in his physical or mental make-up. The secret of his personality, of his dominating mind, does not appear on the surface. The secret of his extraordinary military career with his feats of bravery, his traits of decision, his knowledge of strategy—nothing of that is visible. The single impression that one has is that of a man of peace, of contemplation, perhaps slightly romantic, certainly highly chivalrous.

Few officers have had so meteoric a military career, and one so singularly exempt from favouritism. General Franco had no great family interests behind him. What influence his family had was in the Navy, not the Army.

He had no political party intriguing for his support, no *camarilla* of friends and adherents vaunting him in parliamentary or ministerial circles. He won practically every promotion on the field of battle.

Don Francisco Franco Bahamonde was born at El Ferrol—his family is of Galician stock—in 1892. His father, who is still living in Ferrol, is Don Nicholas Franco Salgado Aurojo, and held the rank of Intendant-General in the Spanish Navy. His mother, who died some years ago, was Doña Pilar Bahamonde. In accordance with a charming Spanish custom, her three sons bear first their father's name, Franco, and then hers, Bahamonde.

General Franco's two brothers are Don Nicholas Franco, who now holds the post of Secretary-General of State and who it is thought will be Minister of the Interior, if and when General Franco forms a normal government with regular ministerial appointments; and Don Ramon Franco, the airman.

Very early in boyhood, young Francisco pleaded with his father to be given the earliest opportunity of entering the Army. There was some opposition, as the family traditions for long past lay on the sea, but it is possible that recent events which had so drastically reduced the fighting value of the Spanish fleet, though it had not tarnished its record for gallantry, helped young Francisco in gaining his father's consent. Anyhow, in 1907, when he was not yet fifteen, his father allowed him to abandon his matriculation studies and to sit for the entrance examination to the Infantry Academy of Toledo, situated in the Alcazar, which years after he was to relieve. He was admitted third on the list, and having passed through the regulation three years' course was given a commission as second lieutenant in 1910. Young Franco devoted



special attention to map work and topography, and in many of the military essays he was called upon to write in connection with the campaign against the Moors in Morocco he laid down with an emphasis that, though it then made his companions laugh, has since proved its value, the argument that a perfect knowledge of the terrain is the only way to order tactical manoeuvres with a certainty of success. General Franco has remained true to his theory of accurate topographical knowledge throughout the present campaign, and has never ordered a move without having brought before him the most detailed, specially prepared maps of the whole field of operations. The young second lieutenant, familiarly called Franquito by his fellow cadets, immediately after a brief leave—given him to show his new uniform to his family at Ferrol—went to Morocco. Rapidly promoted lieutenant, Franco volunteered for the newly formed units of native troops called “Regulares”, the same that are now an integral part of the Spanish Army. These troops with their fine cadres, officers and sergeants in khaki, nearly always without their tunics and with their shirt-sleeves rolled back to the elbow and their scarlet infantry hats shaped very much like those of the British Army, have built up a wonderful reputation. In these early days this reputation had yet to be won, and it was young officers like Franco that set the standard which has been kept ever since. Hardly a month went by without these new troops being in some engagement or other, and when Lieutenant Franco returned from leave having been wounded, General Berenguer, founder of the Regulares, promoted him to the rank of captain. The Moroccan war dragged on, and Captain Franco, leading his infantry in a bayonet charge, received his second wound, being shot through the body. For weeks he lay

between life and death, and when he recovered he received not only the Military Medal but command of one of the tabors (battalions) with the rank of major. He was then just twenty-three years old.

General José Millan d'Astray, one of the most romantic figures of the Spanish Army, who, with his bullet-scarred face, his empty sleeve, and his limp, is the legendary hero of Spain's reconquest of Morocco, had at that time undertaken the foundation of a new Spanish Foreign Legion, which was to be predominantly Spanish, but in which foreigners could enlist. He wished to make of this body a regiment second to none, and he was therefore looking round him for officers of exceptional courage and value and at the same time of the highest military attainments. One of the first he picked on was Major Franco. The young officer, still affectionately called *Franquito*, thus became officer in command of the first *bandera* of the *Tercio*, as the Legion was called, and second in command of the Legion itself. Millan d'Astray, ably seconded by young Franco, then set to work to make the Legion, for valour and discipline, that which it now is—one of the finest bodies of colonial troops in the world. Through the next few years, Major Franco, with his companions in arms, the one-armed, one-eyed Millan d'Astray, the brave *Sanjurjo*—killed in an aeroplane accident while speeding from Portugal to throw in his lot with the present movement—and *Yague* with his lion's mane of then yellow, now white hair, spent eleven months in the year fighting and training the *banderas* of the new Legion. It was among such men that Franco made a reputation for bravery, and they were the best of judges. At this time he always rode at the head of his battalion of the Legion on a white horse, and when it went into battle he

did not dismount but used to ride along the line of fire, giving orders. Affectionately rebuked for this by his superior, Colonel Sanjurjo, Franco replied: "My men are accustomed to see me like that, and it is of special value when the bullets are flying fast and they may be feeling a little nervous."

It was thus that at thirty years of age Franco took over the supreme command of the Tercio with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. General Primo de Rivera was then dictator of Spain and, quick to recognise the talents of this young officer, after the capture of Alhucemas, which brought the Moroccan campaign to a close, he not only awarded him a second Military Medal—an extraordinary distinction—but made him Brigadier-General and placed him in charge of the newly founded General Military Academy of Saragossa. Franco was then just thirty-two. During the years that General Franco was in command of the Military Academy of Saragossa, the foundation of which had for its object the unification of military theory and tradition throughout the Spanish Army, Marshal Pétain visited Spain and on his return to France was loud in his praise, not only of the great work done by General Franco in the few years the Academy had existed, but also of his military talents.

Then came the closing down of the Academy in 1929, owing to a change of policy, and for the time being General Franco, the man of action, was without a job. That did not mean idleness for him, nor did it mean that he abandoned even for a minute his devotion to the Army and to military study. In 1929 he paid long visits to the German military schools at Dresden and Berlin, and then followed a staff course given by the French staff school at Versailles for colonels and brigade commanders. It was

not until 1933 that General Franco was again given a command as Military Governor of the Balearic Islands. A year later, when Señor Gil Robles was Minister for War in a moderate Republican cabinet, General Franco was called to Madrid to act as Central Chief of Staff. The pendulum swung again and, with an extremist Government, which feared to employ him at home, but also feared to dismiss him, he was given the post of Military Governor of the Canary Islands.

Franco's "luck" has become proverbial throughout the Spanish Army, but it appears to have been much more than mere luck, as the following anecdote will show. In one of the perpetual encounters during the war in Morocco, Colonel Franco, in charge of the right flank troops, had captured the positions given him as objective and, in accordance with his custom, was searching the battle front with his glasses. In the centre about two miles away was a hill which had been taken by irregular native units, and where an engineer company was engaged in building a redoubt. "Come on quickly," Franco suddenly said to his staff, as he dropped his glasses and called for his horse. "There is going to be trouble over there in the centre." A few minutes later, the horses having been brought up, Colonel Franco and his staff were galloping across the field. As they reached the hill, they found the irregulars streaming back in a panic and the engineers surrounded by a mass of hostile infantry. The first effort of Franco and his officers was to rally the native soldiers and, once they were well in hand, to organise a counter-attack which was speedily successful. The hill was retaken, the company of engineers who were holding out rescued, and the enemy driven back with heavy loss.

"That was Franco's 'luck'," all the officers began to say. But one of them questioned Franco, who explained the whole mystery. "I knew there was going to be trouble," he said, "not because I had any sudden intuition, but because I know those native levies, when they have not had a long training like the Regulares, are liable to sudden panic, and that especially if they have lost their favourite officer. Through my glasses I saw a stretcher being carried down the line, and I recognised the green sash of the officer in command of that unit who was greatly loved and trusted by them. I knew that for the time being they would be unreliable and would run if attacked. That is why I rode over and arrived in time to stop the rot."

General Franco has also immense confidence in the cause of Spain, for which he has been fighting during the past months. In the very early days, when the Red fleet blocked the Straits of Gibraltar, and when General Queipo de Llano was receiving reinforcements only by air, a hundred men or so a day, General Franco decided that things must be expedited, and he ordered two banderas of the Legion and two tabors of Regulares to be sent aboard five waiting transports. His staff, who were horror-struck, pointed out that the Nationalists had only one small destroyer, the *Dato*, while the Reds had a small but powerful fleet. "The ships will be sunk, we will have lost our best men and the war at the same time," they said to him. "I have a firm faith in victory," was General Franco's reply, "and the transports must sail at four o'clock this afternoon." His orders were obeyed, and the transports left accompanied by the *Dato*. The Red ships appeared and steamed round for a few minutes and then, apparently suspecting there was some trap, took to their

heels and ran away to Carthagena, while the transports, undisturbed, were able to anchor at Algeciras and land 3,000 men.

General Franco is married to Doña Carmen Polo, and has one little daughter Carmencita, who is twelve years of age. His wife and child are simply adored by all General Franco's Moorish soldiers, and it is touching to see with what alacrity they spring to attention and present arms when Señora Polo Franco passes with little Carmencita. Often while waiting at General Franco's headquarters, first at Caceres and then at Salamanca, I have heard the gay laughter of the little girl and the sound of her feet as she races along the bare and empty corridors of the bishop's palace. I have heard her laughter and prattle sound from the Generalissimo's study, and when I have called on him a few minutes later I have seen that his knees are dusty, and in a corner on a great black oak chest I have seen a folded newspaper which was suspiciously like a "cocked hat".

General Franco was travelling to Burgos to take over the full powers of supreme head of the state from the Junta, and so I went there with him. I had dismissed my old Ford, and had taken another French car, but I was glad to be rid of it when I reached Valladolid. Something had gone wrong with the exhaust, and its tyres were so thin that both the front ones blew out within an hour. The first time we were travelling at about seventy-five miles an hour, and it was a wonder that we were able to keep the road. At Valladolid I hired another car, also French, but with a Spanish driver, Juan, who has been with me ever since. He has been a good servant, at first somewhat fearful and always very obstinate. He drove fast and none too well. But, after months of campaigning

and months of careful instruction, he learnt to take hair-pin bends at not much faster than forty miles an hour, not to drive through villages as if he were engaged in a Grand Prix motor race, while he developed a feeling of immense superiority over all the other chauffeurs who went to the front and had occasionally to dash past cross-roads avoiding shells, or along an exposed bit of road when machine-gun bullets were singing past. He was as typically Spanish as Antoine was typically French, but both of them were very good and loyal fellows.

When we arrived at Burgos, I was able to write down and telegraph to London a very plain definition of General Franco's home and foreign policy. In subsequent conversations with him I have had this policy laid down with even greater emphasis. Nobody knows what the future may bring to Spain, but it will always be interesting to know what General Franco wanted and what was his standpoint on social and foreign affairs.

To begin with, it should be pointed out that General Franco had never been a politician-general. He knew little of the rivalries of parties and certainly never shared in them. On the advent of the Republic, though it is probable that General Franco did not share in the public enthusiasm for this sudden change, which he most likely realised was against the historic traditions of the Spanish race and was almost bound to lead to insurrections and Red atrocities, he continued to serve as a loyal soldier devoted to his duty. He willingly collaborated with the moderate Republican government of 1934, and there is no doubt but that if Azana and other Republican leaders had sincerely desired to maintain order in 1936, and had honestly called for the collaboration of the Army, they would almost certainly have found General Franco eager

and anxious to support an honest and independent trial of the new system.

Azana and his fellows, actuated partly by fear and partly by ambition, scorned the help of the Army, however, and preferred to truckle to the forces of the extreme Left. Communists, Socialists, and even Anarchists, many with long criminal careers behind them, were sure of an immediate reception at the President's palace or ministers' offices. Generals and the like could hang about in waiting-rooms for hours at a time.

It became obvious that things were going from bad to worse, and that a complete upheaval could not be long delayed. The Azana hangers-on were afraid to accept the help of the Army for fear they should be obliged to abandon part of their political campaigns of greed and anti-religious hatred, while, on the other hand, they submitted to the almost open blackmail of the Red extremists. If in an Andalusian village two or three Civil Guards were killed, if a convent or a monastery were burnt, if a priest or a nun were murdered, it was no use seeking redress. The Azana government preferred to look upon it as an unfortunate accident for which Government blindness and clemency ought always to be available.

But for these Army officers, trained to respect discipline, law and order, imbued with the traditions of Christian Spain, things were different. They felt in the great majority that they could not accept the imposition, by a minority, of the atheistic principles of Moscow on Spain. They decided that if things did not improve, the Army would have to do once more what it had so often done in the past, take over the government of the country itself.

General Franco himself, in explaining the Pronunciamiento which heralded the rising of the Army against the



Madrid Government, has always stressed the fact that this Government, by its anti-constitutional measures, by its condoning of crime, and by its supine attitude towards the imminent menace of a Marxist revolution, had forfeited, morally, all right to be considered the legitimate Government of the country. The Army movement, on the other hand, though outwardly at the outset a revolt against the established Government, was the justifiable defence of the "real Spain" against deadly menace from abroad. It had the support, not only of the two strong political parties, the Carlists and the Falangists, but of the great mass of the people—workers, middle class, and aristocrats alike.

It is for this reason that General Franco and the other military leaders, whatever may have been their own private political leanings, have held the balance so justly between all the warring factions. For the time being, a truce has been called, and that truce is being observed. The future happiness of Spain probably lies in the possibility of General Franco, the *caudillo* or leader of Spain, being able, consecrated by victory, to maintain himself as sole dictator for a sufficient number of years for animosities to die down and for a new generation to spring up which can knit together the various political ideals and secure unity for one strong and sane solution.

I have discussed the whole of the domestic and foreign situation with General Franco on several occasions, and I take at random from my note-book the following series of quotations which serve to illustrate what the Spanish *caudillo* and dictator was thinking about during the war:

"In Spain we are fighting, not a Spanish internal foe, but the Russian Communist International, which has its affiliations in every country.

## THE SPANISH WAR

"We are determined to free our Spain from the deadly influences of those Marxist principles, which are not only false and anti-Christian, but are also entirely foreign to all our traditions and culture.

"It is natural that there should be a deep and growing sympathy between Spain and Germany and Italy; it is natural that both those powers should wish to help us. We all three have the same enemy—Communism. Germany has had to fight Communism; and Signor Mussolini, when he set up the Fascist régime, was fighting Communism.

"The Spain of the future will be an authoritarian state.

"There will be no parliament, but, as every government must be founded on the consensus of opinion, the will of the people will be made known, when the time comes, through corporative assemblies.

"The whole idea of the New State of Spain is to be founded on the rigid principle of all authority resting in the State itself.

"New municipalities, whose origins date far back in Spanish history and are an integral part of our domestic self-government, are to be given the requisite power and authority to carry out their numerous and important tasks.

"When it may be found opportune the will of the nation will manifest itself through those technical organisations and corporations which can most authentically express the ideals and the needs of the nation.

"I want Labour to be protected in every way against the abuses of Capitalism, both as regards wages and hours and conditions of labour. My objective would be finally profit-participation for workers in all enterprises.

## FRANCO, GENERALISSIMO AND CHIEF OF STATE

"I wish to establish the dignity of the worker, and for that end I wish to lay down that in the new Spain there should not be a single idle person. There is no room in the new Spain for parasites, and all must work."

These views are very close to those held by Right parties the world over, but General Franco was, nevertheless, always careful not to appear to associate himself particularly with any one movement. He gave pledges to the Carlist Party by his strong insistence on the unique position of the Roman Catholic religion and Church in Spain, and he also took care never to close the doors to the upholders of the principles of Monarchy, who are probably a majority throughout the country.

My view is that General Franco intends to keep the government in his own hands for such a period—ten years perhaps—as he may find necessary, and then, gauging public sentiment as expressed in the trade organisations and not by elections, he will make the final decision as to whether Spain should continue merely as a corporative state with a dictator at its head or whether monarchy should be restored within the framework of such a state. My personal feelings are that at some time or other it is the latter course which will prevail.

## THE FIRST ASSAULT ON MADRID

OCTOBER 1936

THE next move for General Franco was to order General Varela to march on Madrid. The situation was a strange one. In a great semicircle the troops of General Mola held the heights of the Guadarrama range from near Sigüenza to Robledo de Chavela and south of the Escorial. There the ground was rocky, the roads ran through ravines, and progress would be difficult. In the plains of the Tagus valley practically from the foothills of the Gredos range to Toledo was strung out the army of General Varela, which with the addition of General Monasterio's cavalry and some militia units under Colonel Rada did not number more than 30,000 men. The only solution was a very rapid march forward and a brave attempt at carrying Madrid in a single assault. This attempt was made and failed.

The speeches and receptions over, General Franco, now sole dictator of Spain, turned his attention once more to the war. He decided that, however pressing might be the demands from Vitoria, facing Bilbao, and Saragossa, facing Barcelona, precedence for the time being should be given to two fronts, Oviedo and Madrid. At Oviedo, General Aranda was being besieged by twelve thousand miners and Red militiamen. He had barely two thousand men left to defend the city against the Asturian *dynamiteros*. Relief forces were sent to prevent the Reds having a success to balance their defeat at Toledo, and on October

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19 Oviedo was relieved. The limited forces available did not allow, however, of the more effective operation which would have cleared the hills round Oviedo of the Reds, and till the end of the campaign of 1937 the Asturians battered away at the Nationalist line, still hoping to be able to force their way into the city.

I, however, returned to Talavera de la Reina as I felt that the more important action would have to be fought on the Madrid front. Little did I believe then, at the beginning of October 1936, that the operations were to be so protracted.

Talavera was the same crowded and evil-smelling town and there was the same difficulty in obtaining accommodation. But by this time I was becoming quite well known, and so very shortly all arrangements were made for myself, my new chauffeur Juan, and the car. My first duty was to present myself again to General Varela's staff. I then met Major the Marquis de Salis, who throughout the following weeks was to be invaluable as a guide and mentor to the Press on the Madrid front. Very amiably he made out for me a pass allowing me to follow General Varela's columns. It sounded too good to be true, and, it was, for the censorship and restrictions of all kinds on the movements of correspondents were to be increased in severity as the weeks went on until it was impossible, in theory at least, for a war correspondent to move a yard without a special visa, a special safe-conduct, and usually a Press officer to see that he did not stray on the way. We were all of us shepherded to Salamanca for a great counting of the sheep and the goats, and then Captain Bolin handed out to us all neat brown Press passes which carefully specified that the holder was not to go to the front without due authorisation from the

competent staff, nor without a guardian angel in the shape of a Press officer by his side. I do not think that quite so many war correspondents have ever been gathered at the same spot at the same time. We filled to overflowing the hall-way of the bishop's palace, adopted by General Franco as his headquarters in Salamanca, and there within the forty-eight hours two hundred of the little brown passes were issued. Some of us grumbled, but most of us laughed, especially when we were told that shortly another series of passes would be issued us, this time green, which would be available only for the entry to Madrid. We were in high spirits in those days: the weather was fine, the Nationalist troops were victorious, and Madrid, after all, was only fifty miles away.

The first operations I was to witness were the clearing of the Avila road to Maqueda, which thus provided another and valuable switch-connection between north and south. General Monasterio's cavalry and mechanised forces had been pushing their way through the Sierra de Gredos towards the big village of Cebreros, while another column had seized the heights to the north. By October 12 the great water dam of El Tiemblo, where the Alberche river makes an artificial lake of considerable beauty several miles long, and all the surrounding roads and villages, had been seized, and the Reds were falling back in confusion along the road to Brunete and thence Madrid. I drove, the following day, down the El Tiemblo road to St. Martin Valdeiglesias, using for almost the last time my Varela pass which gave me comparative liberty of movement. All along the road there were wrecked cars, significant evidence of the speed with which the Reds had retreated. At St. Martin, a friendly officer, after a glance at my pass, offered me some of the local wine from a goatskin flask.

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It was sweet and had the full flavour of the grape, a delectable drink but very heady. A few miles outside St. Martin Valdeiglesias, on the road to the fortress town of Escalona, there is a pretty dell with a grassy sward and the shadow of great rocks and parasol pines where I lunched. On many occasions afterwards during the month of October when on the way to the front my friends and myself would lunch here. We called the place Paradise, and it bore a striking resemblance to the scenery painted by the primitive Italians when they wished to depict the Garden of Eden.

General Varela was very short of men. His march to Toledo had been a daring feat of bluff, and his march to Madrid was to be even more daring. The African expeditionary force itself did not number much more than fourteen to fifteen thousand men, and it was by shuffling the units from one side to another that General Varela was able to appear in strength, one day on the Toledo road, and the next day on the Estremadura highway, the two great avenues of approach to Madrid from the west. The men were carried, as usual, by lorry from point to point, but nevertheless there is no doubt that at one moment they were tired almost to cracking point. October 17 was the day when the real march on Madrid began with a rapid move up the road from Toledo. The Reds had been attacking and had even claimed to have re-captured the city. General Varela's reply was brutal. His main objective was not so much to free the city as to bring under the fire of his guns the Madrid eastern railway to Valencia which, leaving the city in a south-westerly direction, was within striking distance.

General Varela was standing on the Mirador of Toledo at eight o'clock in the morning with Colonel Asensio and

his staff by his side. A fine-looking man in his Moroccan *djellebah*, embroidered with gold and green, he wore the glittering emblem of the Laurelled Cross of San Fernando, which is the highest decoration any Spanish officer can receive. General Varela won this distinction, which is only given for signal acts of personal bravery and devotion to duty, on two occasions, and has the right to wear two crosses. It is never given more than twice, and one could count on one's fingers the men who have been awarded the double distinction.

While the General was standing there, with his personal bodyguard of swarthy Moroccans formed up fifty yards away ready to follow him the moment he should decide to push forward, an officer told me the story of how he earned his first Cross.

It was during the fighting round Alhucemas which was to bring the long-drawn-out series of wars in Spanish Morocco to an end that General (then Colonel) Franco was entrusted with the command of two columns and ordered to clear the way for the left flank of the Spanish advance. The task was a difficult one, for the terrain was of the worst possible nature, full of ravines, rocky caves, and sudden precipices, all of which were used to the utmost by the wily and brave Moorish enemy. After three days of incessant fighting it was found that one column was held up owing to a galling fire from a cavern perched high on the mountain-side and in such a position that the artillery could not reach it owing to the angle of fire, while from it the whole line of advance was enfiladed. Several attempts were made to rush the pass, but they only resulted in heavy loss of life. Franco then called for volunteers who would climb up at night and, using cold steel, capture the cave. Varela, then a young



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lieutenant, sprang forward and with him twenty men from his bandera. That night, carrying knives or bayonets, the little party set out on its climb to the top of the pass where the cave was situated. Hours went by and then there came shouts from above. This was the signal for the whole column to move forward. They advanced without a shot being fired, and when they came level with the cave there was still not a sign of life.

Franco sprang off his horse and told his orderly to bring a torch. With the aid of its light Franco stepped under the rocky entrance, and at that moment young Varela crawled out. He was half naked and covered with blood from a dozen wounds. In his hand he still clutched his own great knife. He could not answer questions, but a search of the cavern showed that the desperate little party had killed or wounded the whole body of Moors, forty in number. They themselves had also suffered terribly. Twelve of them were dead or dying, and eight were badly wounded.

The telling of this anecdote had taken some time, and suddenly on the horizon I could see the flaming spot of a heliograph spring to life. Behind me was Varela's travelling wireless, but in this open warfare the heliograph was as much used as anything. It was a message to tell us that the first village, Olias del Rey, had been captured and that we were all to move forward. The Mirador had been a picturesque sight under the brilliant October sun—the autumn lasts long on the Madrid plateau—with the blue and scarlet cloaks of the Moroccan cavalry escort, the flat scarlet and gold caps of the Regulares officers, all gathered on the terrace beneath the walls of the magnificent old city.

Back to our cars we ran, and in a whirl of dust we

followed General Varela and his staff to the newly captured village. The country was of the type with which we were to become familiar, occasional rolling hills covered with scrub, then an olive grove and a few fields, and then more bare parched hills. The Reds had put up a stiff resistance, and there were half a hundred bodies lying about the place. In Olias del Rey itself there lay sprawling over a map-covered table in the village hall a bearded man of bulky stature with a round hole in his forehead from which blood had poured down on to some order papers, stamped with the hammer and sickle. It was the Red commander of the sector. He had committed suicide when he saw his men running.

Outside Olias del Rey on the banks of the road we took our stand. A plane table was hastily erected for the accurate map spotting necessary, and a range-finder next to it. The country rolled away gently below us in a series of stubble fields to a green spot where patches of cabbages and garden stuff could be seen and where a single-track railway line ran. A few hundred yards beyond was the village of Cabanas de la Sagrada, the objective of the central column. Far to the right I could see the Tagus and the low-lying ground on the other side. It was here that the cavalry was working with, as its objectives, the railway junctions of Algodor and Castiljo, the control of which meant the cutting of the last railway link between Madrid and the rest of Spain. In ravines I could see horse lines and a great deal of transport. Over the hills occasional bursts of smoke showed that shelling was going on, but we had to rely on the messages that were coming through to General Varela to follow the victorious sweep of the cavalry, which by three o'clock in the afternoon had occupied all its objectives and

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completely cut the railway lines. I had only just arrived at Olias del Rey when I saw white steam moving quickly across the sky-line. It was the last train from Valencia to Madrid making a desperate and successful dash to get through to the Reds before the Nationalist artillery began to play on the railway line and the neighbouring goods depots and shunting yards.

Meanwhile, the fighting on the main road had been proceeding with incredible speed. The troops leap-frogged each other, gaining five kilometres in an hour. At Cabanas de la Sagrada two lines of trenches had been captured and, having entered Olias del Rey at ten in the morning, the staff and ourselves were in Cabanas de la Sagrada at two o'clock in the afternoon, while the advance guards were on Villaluenga aerodrome four miles ahead of us.

The work had been carried out entirely by Legionaries and Moroccan Regulares—except the valuable right flank cavalry work—and I admired to the full their wonderful manœuvring power. With such open country, it was possible to follow very closely every incident of the fight. Machine-gun posts could be seen pushing out to a flank, taking advantage of every bit of cover, and proceeding in that slow, deliberate fashion which is the mark of a good soldier and is worth twice as much as agitated hurry. The Red trench lines were clearly visible, but they never seemed adequately defended. The militia bunched in the redoubts near the main road or side roads, while hundreds of yards of good positions on hill slopes were left unguarded. Legionaries or Moors never failed to take advantage of such gaps to infiltrate the Red lines and place their guns time after time to enfilade those positions still held. Then there would come the moment

of hesitation when the rot would set in, and one could see first two or three and then lines of men making for the road and for the rear. For that was the terrible error the Red militia always made. They stuck to the roads and they ran to the roads when defeated, whereas any man of experience would have known that the best line to fall back on is through open country, avoiding roads like the plague.

The Nationalists, fully aware of this mistake on the part of the Reds, never failed to have their machine-guns placed to command both the road and all its lines of access, and time after time the Red mortalities were infinitely greater in the moment of panicky retreat than during the whole fight. Had those men fallen back steadily across country, at least half of them would have got away. But it is easy to understand their mentality. Badly officered and especially with bad sergeants—this a natural fruit of their vicious political system—these men were brought from the rear to occupy their lines by lorries. They know the lorries are in the nearest village over the next crest and, having no discipline and nobody to take control, the moment there is a panic, every one streams off for the road to foot it back to the lorries and, as they fondly imagine, safety, as fast as they can. Whole lines of them come immediately under the flat trajectory of machine-guns firing at a distance of between five hundred and eight hundred yards, and not one in twenty gets away.

I saw this happen time after time, and it made me reflect on the crimes of those who in any country persuade young men that political speeches and extremist propaganda can be a substitute for military training and discipline, or that the science of war can be learnt by listening to

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Communist or Socialist tub-thumping. I picked up on the field of battle many little pamphlets on how to use an automatic rifle, or on the training of a platoon. Half the pages were full of rubbish about freely consented discipline and the uselessness of the old forms of military severity, and the other half contained a few pious maxims about the value of trench warfare. Any idea of attacking or manœuvring was entirely foreign to such handbooks. It was typical, however, of Red psychology to imagine that the art of war could be taught to the scores of thousands by the aid of penny pamphlets.

The next morning the advance was resumed, and with almost equal facility first Yuncas was taken and then Illescas, a large village just twenty-four miles from Madrid. Once again the motor-lorries carried forward the troops, who advanced in file and then, deploying, by sheer brilliance of manœuvring out-flanked and out-fought the Reds at every point. Once more the cavalry brigade held the right flank and guarded against any sudden sally on the part of the strong Red garrison of Aranjuez, which is a sort of minor Toledo at the junction of the Jarama river and the Tagus.

I reached Yuncos after its capture, in time to see a battery of Nationalist 4-inch mountain guns rushed up and put into position at the Madrid entrance to the village to fire on the Reds falling back on Illescas. An hour later that village was also taken.

On my way back there was an amusing incident which showed the general uselessness of armoured trains. This train was one which had been built by the Nationalists. It was merely composed of two trucks with double sheets of boiler-plating built up round them and embrasures for one field-gun and four machine-guns. The

engine, also protected, was in the middle between the two trucks.

The railway line which runs from Talavera de la Reina to Madrid had been specially repaired to allow of the passage of the armoured train, but the track was occasionally on an embankment and occasionally in a cutting. Each time the guns of the train might have been useful it was found to be in a cutting, and each time the enemy artillery fire was dangerous the track was on an embankment, and so the train could not move forward. When on my way back I arrived at the level crossing south of Cabanas de la Sagrada, I saw the train drawn up in a cutting. It had gone forward past Villaluenga and Azana towards Illescas, and then had returned at full speed. The lieutenant in charge asked us for news of what had been happening. "I have been shut up in that beastly thing," he said, "and I do not know where we are. I have just seen great activity at Illescas, and I do not know whether the enemy are not going to counter-attack." He was relieved but none too pleased, all the same, when we told him that Illescas had been taken an hour or more previously, and that the activity he had seen was that of his own troops.

It must not be thought, however, that the Reds took everything lying down, but merely that their counter-attacks when launched were nearly always at the wrong strategic point and nearly always badly handled, though occasionally pushed forward with great violence. Indeed, the Reds had the usual bravery of untried and ill-trained troops. They would charge forward through heavy fire and would fight extremely well until there came either an adverse incident or till they felt tired and feared for the safety of their retreat. They would then suddenly

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crack up. They had at that time no *esprit de corps* or discipline to keep them in the line.

I witnessed that a few days later when I was visiting Major Castejon's columns at Chapineria, on the twisting road which leads from St. Martin de Valdeiglesias to Madrid via Brunete. As an example of the dangerous character of the road I may say that immediately after crossing the Guadarrama by a military breakdown bridge, the stone bridge having been blown up, the road twists and turns thirty-four times before reaching the top of the plateau, and is described in the guide-books, as being one of the most dangerous roads in the district. The ground is covered either with dwarf oak and shrub or by olives, twisted and stunted. The olive groves in all this region are very old and there are very many trees which were planted not long after the great Armada left Spain.

Castejon had been having a lively time, and his casualties were greater than those of the columns which had taken part in the offensive and which had in two days just made the great leap forward from Toledo to Illescas, a distance of twenty miles. A number of Red battalions from General Mangada's headquarters at Boadilla del Monte—this place was to prove a thorn in the Nationalist side for many weeks, much work having been expended on it by all the Red reserve units—moved forward that very morning to attack Castejon in Chapineria. They had brought up four batteries of artillery, and when we crested the slope in two cars it was obvious that all we could do was to wait where we were until the fight came to an end. The Reds came right round the village in the fields pressing forward with courage and at great speed. Major Castejon, who had only 700 men with him

at the time, using the village itself as a strong point, withdrew his left wing so as to bring the Reds still farther forward towards the main road, while he extended his right so that he was able to place six heavy machine-guns in battery on the rising ground south of the road. The Reds fell into the trap. Their officers did not seem to realise that something unusual was taking place, but were only too glad that their men should for once be pushing forward quickly. And at the crucial moment when the mass of the Red forces was just clear of the village, Castejon launched his counter-attack; he had only two hundred men to spare for this, but they were Legionaries. The Reds were first held up and then, when they began to show signs of fatigue, all the guns in the village redoubt and all the machine-guns on the crest, which so far had been silent, opened fire. The result was instantaneous. The Red lines, composed of units from six different battalions, broke. The men, to avoid the immense detour they had made on their way out through the olive groves and ploughed land, went straight down the village street as the shortest way back. They were decimated on their passage, and when they emerged on the north-eastern slope they came under the direct fire of the massed machine-gun company. It was a bloody rout. The Reds lost 2,000 dead, or over half their force. It must be said, however, for the Mangada column that it fought again and again with determination though with equal bad luck during the next three months.

For two or three days I wandered round this left flank or mountain sector of the Nationalist army. Occasionally I went with Juan in my car, sometimes my friend d'Hospital accompanied me in an armoured car on a tour of inspection of the front posts. We expected then to hear



the rattle of bullets on our steel skin, but nothing happened and we lumbered along the road feeling hot and uncomfortable for little adequate return.

At Robledo de Chavela, quite high in the mountains, we could see the Escorial, the great burial place of the kings of Spain, nestling against the southern flanks of the Guadarrama range, just before the watershed which separates it from the Sierra de Gredos. The huge, orderly building, so characteristic in its style of the monastic coldness of its founder Phillip the Second, was gleaming in the sun. On the hill slopes above it, through the trees, was marked the strange V-shaped clearing which, produced either by wood-cutters or possibly by some giant avalanche, served as a landmark for thirty miles around to indicate the exact position of the monastery.

During these days the shepherds were coming down from the heights of the sierras bringing their flocks lower for the winter. Strangely enough many flocks which had been feeding on the Red slopes were driven down to Nationalist territory without hindrance. It was extraordinary that the Reds should have allowed these valuable flocks to go without making any effort to stop them. It is possible, of course, that they did not understand their maps, and did not realise that the flocks were being taken away from them under their own eyes. Mules and donkeys carried the summer outfit of tent and pots and pans, and then, strung all round the animals' saddles or panniers, were rows of little rush bags, each containing a baby lamb, too young to run along with the rest of the flock, on their long trek. Their tiny heads alone peeped out of the rushwork, while their anxious mothers ran behind occasionally replying to the bleating of their little ones. It was a touching sight, and so was

the spectacle so often seen of a long, loose-limbed young fellow with a gaunt face and a long dark beard, striding down the mountain-side with a sheep held by its four legs over his shoulders.

There are many wolves in these mountains, and the sheep-dogs are mainly concerned with keeping watch on them. In severe winters wolves have been seen in packs of twenty to thirty quite near such busy centres as the city of Avila.

I often visited the Nationalist lines in the mountains during these days and was always amazed at the stern beauty of the scenery beneath those lovely skies, clear, cold blue or storm-streaked with red and violet clouds. The Sierra de Gredos during all these winter months, and even into February and March of 1937, formed a modest playground for us. When there was a possibility of twenty-four hours' rest, much needed after weeks of hard work and perpetual travelling by car in the humid and depressing climate of the Tagus valley, it was a relief to climb by the town of Arenas de San Pedro, with its stolid grey stone church and its ruined castle, up the winding streets of Mombeltran to the Pico pass and from there on the Barco de Avila road to the Parador de Gredos, where warm, clean, comfortable rooms with hot baths awaited us, and whence the view of Almanzor and other giants of the Gredos range awaited one. Amusing too, early in the morning, after an English breakfast of eggs and bacon and tea, to order a couple of hacks—long-haired, weedy-looking animals, but very sure of foot—and ride for a couple of hours through the clear, cold winds of the mountain. It was strange also to find the extraordinary difference of temperature when one trotted down the hill path from the wind-swept slopes with their

patches of driven snow into the pine woods, barely one hundred feet below. Some of my best memories of the war are associated with the Sierra de Gredos and its magnificent vistas of snow-capped peaks and forest-clad ravines.

There are few places in Spain where the whole colour of the scenery from a delicate tracery of blue and purple, with soft patches of almost lead-grey white, can be changed in an instant to ruddy gold and silver with great streamers of green and red in the sky, as at almost any point in the Gredos mountains. And yet I remember a December day in Avila when I was visiting General Mola's headquarters in the Provincial Treasury, near the great southern parapets of the city. It was evening, and suddenly the sky became a glory of copper and dark purple as the dying western sun, low on the horizon, lit from beneath the storm clouds, which were scudding along just on a level with the battlemented walls. It was a sight such as took one's breath away and left one with a living love for a country where such ineffable beauty is so lavishly displayed.

Meanwhile the pressure on the Madrid front continued. It would be wearisome to relate the detail in story of those marches and counter-marches which finally brought General Varela to the bridges of Segovia and Toledo and to the desperate but unavailing attempt to rush the capital. I will transcribe from my note-book one engagement which was typical of them all, the capture of Navalcarnero, then presented as the key of the defensive line round the Spanish capital. It was October 21 and the attack was directed along the Talavera-Madrid road, known to Spaniards as the Estremadura road.

Just outside Valmojado on the heights we found once more General Varela and his staff, the suave, clean-shaven,

Major de Salis, and the giant figure of Captain Delgado, with his smiling ruddy face, and his ready joke. We had been in trouble—the journalists—about having come so far, but we felt that we had now been excused and stayed on. On the crests and slopes from one to three hundred yards away were the vigilant Moors of General Varela's escort, mostly men approaching six feet, rifle in hand, scrutinising every movement. The reason was that during the whole of these engagements the lines were so tenuous and so scattered, and General Varela and his staff pressed so continuously almost into the front line of the fighting, that due precautions had to be made lest a sudden surprise counter-attack or a hidden party of the enemy might not attempt a raid on General Varela and his staff. I must say that I do not believe there is any Red commander capable of preparing or carrying out so bold a scheme.

Once again the terrain falls before us in gentle slopes, stubble fields and olive groves, with here and there a farm and the blue asphalted road with its curves outlined by the familiar red and white fence. Along the road were the lines of motor transport in the fields, the light artillery with their caterpillar tractors bunched behind in a hollow, just where the horses would have been in the olden days. Further forward were the dotted lines of infantry, with here and there, the first time I have seen them in numbers in open battle of this nature, larger and darker spots—the whippet tanks used to destroy the enemy's barbed wire. White puffs showed that the enemy, too, were busy, and one held one's breath as the puffs seemed to rise straight from a little group of living, moving dots, and felt relieved when they moved calmly on as if nothing had happened.

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The sun has been very hot to-day and I saw a Legionary bring water to a black and white goat tethered in one of the lorries, exclaiming, "The poor animal is thirsty." The *cantinières* of the Legion were busy moving up and down preparing mint tea and other drinks for their particular banderas, and the scene was almost one of peace. Then some enemy tank must have come in sight along a distant fold of the ground. It was probably one of the new Russian tanks whose presence was just then being signalled. We all strained eyes to glasses to find it, but we could see nothing.

General Varela's staff and all of us were standing just in front of a dilapidated farmhouse wall on the Madrid side of the village. Where the wall came to an end on the right was a potato patch. I heard a familiar little whistle, and looking back towards the withered potato plants I saw a little white spurt and heard at the same time a muffled explosion. This was repeated three times, and then I found everybody looking the same way. Once more there were four bursts, and we all realised that the Russian tank was firing at us. But as we could not see the tank, so the tank could not see us, and there was little reason to worry. Another dozen or so of shells were thrown, always about a hundred feet away, and then some change in the front line invisible to us must have taken place, forcing the tank to scurry away, for no more shells arrived. These looked amusing and innocent at the distance where they burst, but they are in reality very dangerous things. Fired very rapidly and usually with great accuracy, these small shells burst into scores of frightfully dangerous splinters, and if they fall in the midst of a group they can kill or wound a dozen men.

Once more we followed the usual procedure and moved

forward as the first slopes were taken until we came to the top of the slope leading down into Navalcarnero and about two miles from the little town. The road there makes a double hairpin curve, and at the top of the hill is a roadmaker's rest house. I stopped there for two hours watching the scene. I had already sent back by car a long telegram describing the operations, but I knew that the only important thing was the actual fall of Navalcarnero itself. The Reds by their boasting had made it a redoubt of supreme importance. Largo Caballero himself and other Red leaders had visited the triple lines of trenches, the concrete dugout and machine-gun positions, and had proclaimed that they were invulnerable. I knew that once again Monasterio's cavalry and an infantry column were guarding the right wing, while Major Castejon's vigilant and victorious troops were on the watch on the left. Three columns, each about fifteen hundred strong, were entrusted with the task of silencing the machine-guns and rushing the formidable trench system surrounding the town. They were Barron on the left, Asensio in the centre, and Delgado on the right. These leaders were picked officers, with great records, and their men were tireless fighters.

At the little house where I stood, there were piles of newspapers and letters, evidently just arrived from the field post office. While the infantry were getting into position and while the enemy shells were ploughing the fields on either side, hundreds of yards away, we amused ourselves reading both newspapers and letters. Some of these were very pathetic, not so much because they were addressed to men probably dead, but because of the pitiful ignorance of the reasons for the Civil War and the state of the conflict which they displayed.

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Livelier sounds of shelling brought us all back to the crest of the road, both the staff and the few journalists who had cared to come so far, and then we could see among the light clouds of dust, mainly caused by bursting shells and the impact of bullets on the still parched ground, Barron's men pushing up from the left. The movement in the centre and right had gone so fast that already the battery of light artillery just in front of us had sent for its tractors and was ready to pull out before advancing its position.

I had thought to have seen the town fall much more quickly, and in fact was anxious to prepare my message to that effect as soon as possible. On the far slope of the hill my car was waiting, turned in the right direction and ready to rush away with my final telegrams as soon as I gave the signal. Telegraphic delays, I knew, were long, and the hour was growing late. The sun was sinking to the horizon behind me, and yet when I looked through my glasses I could see no change. Captain Delgado of the staff passed me, and in reply to my shouted inquiry answered, "Not yet, not yet."

In the distance on the left I could see Barron's first lines of skirmishers lying on the edge of a ploughed field almost under a white water-tower; in the centre the slope hid Asensio's men from view; but on the right, where the main Madrid road left Navalcarnero and where the Reds had prepared their strongest fortifications, I could see three Moorish machine-gun units slowly moving across the fields towards a whitewashed farmhouse, already held by the extreme points of their advance guards and from which it was evident that a terrific fire could be poured in enfilade on the Red trenches still held. It was half-past five, and we all had thought the town would

have fallen by three o'clock. Suddenly a harsher scream of machine-gun fire and then the line of Nationalists both on left and right rose and moved forward at what looked like a jog-trot. A Legion officer told me later that he had never been so breathless and had never moved across country quite so fast. On the church tower a red flag flew. Down below, bullets were still whistling, while Nationalist bombers were swooping on the Madrid road dropping their tons of explosives on the serried columns of cars leaving the fated town.

I knew that the end was imminent, and this was confirmed when I saw Barron's men disappear into a sort of gulley which leads into Navalcarnero from the north. And so I sat down on a milestone and began hurriedly to prepare my final dispatch. I heard a cry, and jumping up I saw the red flag slowly disappear from the church tower where it had been hanging limply during the evening hours. There was a minute or so delay. Civilians were clumsily handling the flag halliards in the old red-brick church tower, and then a white flag went up. Navalcarnero had been captured. It was then just half past six. Five seconds later my car was speeding back at sixty miles an hour to drop one telegram in the Talavera post office which would make the venture of the wire to Badajoz, thence to Lisbon and so to London; the second copy another car would carry on over the Sierra de Gredos to Avila to take the wire to London via Vigo. It was thus and only thus that one could be certain that the maximum speed of transmission would be ensured.

Navalcarnero, though captured, was not a place of peace that night. Red militiamen, who had been left behind in the retreat either because they had been genuinely cut off or else because sleeping off the results of a carouse,



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hardly knew what was happening to them, and were firing through the night from one house to another. Colonel Asensio gave the strictest orders that no attempt was to be made to dislodge them at night, and that all that should be done was to put a line of sentries round all such houses so that the men could not possibly escape. The next morning a score of hand-grenades or so were thrown through windows and down chimney pots, a five minutes' scuffle, and all was over. Apparently over, at least, for two days later a Spanish journalist was shot through the lungs and killed by a Red who had remained in concealment all that time.

When I walked through the streets of the little town in the morning I was struck by the dazed expression of the civilian population which remained. It was not difficult to know the reasons. I stopped at a chemist's shop to see if he had any mineral water, a valuable product in any country after a battle when one does not know what may be the pollution of the water supply, and the whole horror of the Red dominion was detailed to me in a few words. "We were all right until the fall of Talavera, I was told, "because all that time the local Committee of Public Safety was formed by townspeople and persons we knew. But after that Madrid sent us out an entirely new committee which we were obliged to obey implicitly. It was made up of the worst scoundrels of Spain. Murders and tortures then became a daily occurrence. Women and young girls were not spared if they resisted the desires of the young criminals of the committee. I can tell you that there is hardly a woman in this town who has not been raped by the Marxist crowd from Madrid and their friends and armed escort. But they all left Navalcarnero two days ago."

I then went to inspect closely and in daylight the trenches which the afternoon before I had picked out with my glasses. It was obvious that they had been planned by some skilled engineer, though here again as so often elsewhere, I found the barbed wire belt thin and ill-placed. The trenches themselves, however, were properly dug, had both parapet and parados and, though not deep enough to need a fire-step, were capable of providing adequate shelter. In all the Red trenches I have visited I was never able to understand how, with all the labour at their disposal, the Red commanders were never able to dig real deep trenches, with real strong-points and with proper cover from enemy hand grenades.

These trenches had large and frequent dug-outs, often with concrete roofs, and yet the bombardment by artillery or even war 'plane was not at that time of sufficient intensity to demand such precautions. More work spent on the trenches and their barbed wire defences and on their tank traps would have paid the Reds better than all these concrete shelters, which incidentally, it appears, were more used by the Red commanders and commissaries than by the soldiers.

I went along the familiar stretch of trench lines finding little signs of resistance till I was level with the great redoubt on the Madrid road with its star-shaped salient, its triple line of wire, and its reserve positions which made it a real strong-point, solid and well built. Here was the first place I saw where a tank had crushed a gap through the barbed wire and then had gone on rocking from side to side to cross the whole system of trenches and to take their occupants by enfilade from the rear. Apparently at the same time the Legionaries and Moors had rushed forward and thrown their hand grenades. In the trenches

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I saw the Red dead lying here and there in groups, then for fifty yards in ones and twos, and then again in a massive group. Here at least the Reds had resisted and stood their ground until they were killed by attack at the closest of ranges, that of the hand grenade.

I looked at the papers of scores of the dead. They had already been taken for a cursory examination by the Spanish Nationalist military authorities, and had been laid down again neatly next to most of the bodies. I found that the dead were nearly always conscripts who had been called up by the Reds and forced to serve for them in their Red army. They had fought bravely, however, and a soldier could but have respect for them. Some eighty yards in the rear I found another body. It was of a handsome young man with olive complexion and black, closely curled hair. He had been shot while making his way back as fast as he could to the rear, from the very trench where so many men had been killed. His papers showed me that he was an elementary school teacher and that he belonged to an advanced section of the Spanish Socialist Party.

From Navacerrero the lights of Madrid could be seen, and it was certain that the Reds within the capital city must by then be aware that they had been defeated and driven back by General Varela. What would the Reds do? was the question we all put, and, though none of us knew, it was certain that most of us thought that they would fall back through the undefended city and take up fresh battle to the east. We all then thought that the capture of Madrid ought only to be the question of a few days, but we were all wrong.

We ought to have realised that General Varela had not many more than fifteen thousand front-line fighting men

with him, and that they could not hold the lines of blockade in front of Madrid and at the same time supply the driving force necessary to pierce through the streets, despite the unlimited use of machine-guns and tanks.

There took place first of all a week of desperate and feverish fighting from place to place along the thin and scanty lines of the Madrid suburbs, then the assault against the line of the Manzanares river—and failure. The reasons for this failure I will discuss in the next chapter. Here I will content myself with an actual description of what took place.

The western and southern suburbs of Madrid consist, first, of the scrubby piece of parkland, known as the Casa de Campo, which undulates north of the Estremadura road to the Corunna road, where in a residential villa district it joins up with the better-known Pardo Park, and then southwards a narrow belt of red-brick houses, mostly with red-tiled roofs from the Segovia bridge to south of the Toledo bridge with two or three considerable suburbs like Carabanchel and Getafé and a number of large factories, the most familiar of which, to us journalists, was one for the manufacture of “washable gloves”. It was all rather mysterious and somewhat frightening to us when we used to dash up at the outset with very little idea of exactly where we were. Custom soon brought contempt, however, and we and everybody else used to drive up by car, eight or nine cars in a procession, along the main road in full view of the enemy and barely five thousand yards from his advanced batteries. The road was often shelled, but rarely when we were on it, though once an Italian journalist who had left his car to make an inquiry returned to find it a heap of scrap iron.

General Varela pushed forward till he held Getafé and

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then Carabanchel and was on the verge of entering Madrid. In front of him was the Manzanares and on the farther bank the capital. The Manzanares, though often a mere trickle, was, owing to its depth and position which enabled Red machine-guns to enfilade attackers, to prove one of the most effective natural defences the Reds had.

By November 7 the Nationalist troops had seized, after fierce resistance, the hill known as the Cerro de los Angeles, and the line of investment was thus complete on the western side. The whole world was waiting for news of the fall of the Spanish capital, and rumours, one wilder than the other, were flying about everywhere. Even we journalists, waiting so anxiously a few miles behind the firing line, listening to the incessant racket of artillery and machine-gun fire, did not know exactly what was happening. Reports came that Nationalist tanks had seized two bridges. Further news was that they had entered the actual streets of Madrid and were being followed by picked assault battalions.

There flashed through the world the news that the Gran Via and the great Telephone skyscraper were in the hands of Varela's troops who controlled the whole southern sector as far as the War Ministry. I must confess that I was confident of rapid victory and thought that the Nationalist advance had gone much farther than it really had. Later, when the disillusionment had somewhat faded, my colleague Paul Bewsher drew for our amusement a map of Madrid showing the points to which various oversanguine correspondents had made the Nationalist troops advance. We were all to blame, though the lack of really reliable information and the feverish anxiety of the hour were valid excuses. But hour after hour went by and there was no confirmation of the entry of Nationalist

troops into Madrid, and in our messages we had cautiously to fall back to the banks of the Manzanares. That was where the fighting was taking place and that was where the lines ran for months to come. Later I learnt that Major Mizzian of the Regulares had actually reached the Plaza de España. He was wounded there and brought out by his devoted soldiers

On November 8 I learnt of a very grim incident which illustrated the ferocity of the fighting and the horror of Red methods. In front of the Segovia bridge, towards which a column of Legionaries was pushing, the Red High Command ordered a battalion of the newly formed Women Militia to deploy. The Legionaries were then advancing from Alcorcon, and their officers, thinking the women had come to surrender—many of them did so in subsequent fighting—ordered their men to cease fire. Soldiers were sent forward to question the women, but suddenly the whole battalion dropped to the ground and opened fire with rifles and machine-guns. There was no alternative but to reply. The inevitable happened. Within an hour the women were running in frantic retreat, leaving more than a hundred dead and wounded. Obeying the orders of their officers, the Legionaries refrained from firing on the retreating women, but merely followed them up to the little bridge-head of villas and small red houses which at this point lines the Manzanares.

By November 11 it was clear that Madrid could not be taken by assault. The Reds had crammed every house which dominated the river with machine-guns. Every street had been barricaded, and heavy and light artillery swept every approach. The only way would have been to batter down the capital house after house, street after street. The loss of life would have been terrible. But it

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was evident that General Franco had at that moment neither the means nor the desire thus to capture the city. His artillery was not sufficiently powerful, nor his supply of shells adequate. He had only a small army confronting Madrid, and he could not accept the terrible costs which a frontal attack would have meant. Over and above that, as he explained to me in eloquent terms, "Madrid is our city, it is our capital. The Reds from Moscow may contemplate its total destruction, but that is a thing which I cannot do"

The first battle of Madrid had come to an end. The attempt to rush its defences had failed because the Reds, instead of falling back from the "open city" of Madrid when they had been defeated in battle before it, had taken refuge in its maze of streets and in the fact that there was a great civilian population, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters of the Nationalists who would be slaughtered were an assault to be pushed to the bitter end. They had lined the barricades of Madrid with foreign volunteers and with foreign arms and, therefore, another way had to be found to capture the capital of Spain.

## VIII

### STALEMATE ON THE MADRID FRONT

NOVEMBER—DECEMBER 1936

THE drive on Madrid had failed and another way had to be found to ensure the capture of the Spanish capital, the major issue of the Civil War.

It was certain that once General Franco held Madrid the Red grasp on the southern region surrounding Ciudad Real and on the eastern provinces, grouped round Cartagena and Valencia, would speedily be loosened. The only remaining issue would thus be a straight fight between Catalonia and the rest of Spain, and the result of such a conflict could not be long in doubt. It was a policy of striking at the head. It continued in favour for a time, and then other methods were chosen. The problem of the moment was therefore how to handle the thorny question of Madrid. There were many who were in favour of a long wait through the winter months while ammunition and stores were being piled up and other military preparations were being completed. Others demurred, saying too much time had been lost already, pointing to the formidable freights of Russian and Mexican military equipment being poured every day into the country. Battalions of foreign troops at a time were coming across the French frontier into Red Spain, and though it was known that counter-steps were being taken to constitute mixed foreign brigades of the Spanish Legion, National anxiety was at its height.

The history of the next few months was to prove that



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the second school of thought was in the wrong. Franco's Nationalist army was not strong enough at that moment to bring the war to an end except at such cost as all its leaders would refuse to contemplate.

I have often consulted during this period a compact little statement prepared from confidential documents showing for the two last months of the year the supply of men and military equipment arriving in Red Spain across the French frontier alone. It would be wearisome to give the table of statistics with their dates, but a few excerpts will show what was the formidable problem facing General Franco.

*October 19* Seven Potez "54" left Paris for Barcelona.

*October 31.* 150 men, mostly British, arrived at Perpignan and left for Barcelona; they were nearly all specialists in explosives or war 'plane manufacture.

*November 2:* 300 more volunteers through Perpignan.

*November 5* Six troop-carrying lorries, the first of a batch of 150, passed through the Perthus pass to Spain.

*November 9.* An expedition of 6,000 men is now passing through Perpignan. Four to five hundred cross the frontier daily, the majority of them being Belgian or French unemployed from the Lille district.

*November 14:* Nine heavy lorries took the Llvia road carrying war 'planes, to be assembled at the Bolvir aerodrome

*November 17:* Five hundred men went through Perthus on motor lorries before six p.m.

*November 24:* A special train arrived at Perpignan carrying 1,100 volunteers of whom 800 were French.

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Before the end of November it was estimated that at least 10,000 Red volunteers, nearly all men with previous military training, had passed through Perpignan alone. Thousands of others had been taken by ship and had landed direct at Barcelona or Valencia. Tanks, machine-guns, and artillery had been poured into the Red ports, and a very large number of international brigades were being built up. It is difficult now to say exactly how strong these brigades were, but from figures given me by competent authorities I should not hesitate to place the total number as being not much less than about 60,000 men.

Against this formidable figure, throughout the winter months General Franco had little to place. Until well into the new year it would have been true to say that no body of foreign infantry was fighting on his side. Obviously from the outset the Nationalists had bought war 'planes from abroad, since the majority of the small Spanish aviation corps was in the hands of the Madrid Government when the rising took place at the end of July. Foreign airmen came to fly these machines, and squadrons of bombing and chaser 'planes, entirely manned by either German or Italian volunteers, were used, while Spanish airmen were being trained. As the war grew in intensity, though more machines were being piloted by Spaniards the foreign volunteers could not be dispensed with. There were also foreign artillery, tanks, anti-tank guns, and anti-aircraft guns. In the beginning these were manned entirely by foreigners, but Spanish tank crews and Spanish gunners were trained and the original foreign volunteers gradually became confined to the task of specialists for repair and upkeep.

Then as the strength and numbers of the Red

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international brigades became known, it was found essential to form to counterbalance them mechanised infantry units of foreign volunteers, which could be put in the field as units though under the high command of Spanish generals, and which could provide that element of shock power which so far had been confined more or less to the brigades from Africa. The first time that any of the foreign infantry units took part in fighting was at the capture of Malaga, and even then their action was confined to one surprise attack on one of the roads leading to that city. Later in the year, when more decisive actions took place round Madrid, further mechanised units of Italian volunteers, heavily armed and well provided with tanks, took a prominent part in the fighting. The Irish brigade, though small in numbers, was also one of the foreign units which could be relied on.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of foreign volunteers in the service of the National Government, but I would be surprised if subsequent detailed examination proved them to be much over 60,000 men. The Red international volunteers on the side of Madrid, and the White international volunteers on the side of Burgos must have, in a sense, more or less cancelled themselves out. It was also certain that the Reds had invoked this foreign aid much earlier than had the Nationalists, as was evidenced by the presence of Red foreign infantry in the line at the end of October, at least three months before the Nationalists had any similar units in the field. Had the Nationalists marched straight on Madrid at the end of September, they would not have found any of these foreign units or foreign weapons, and most probably the Spanish capital would have fallen at the first assault. But as I have already said, the Alcazar of

Toledo would have been captured by the Reds, and that was the alternative which confronted General Franco.

At the moment when the first assault on Madrid had failed, the Nationalist position in the field, and especially in the Northern Madrid sector, was one of considerable peril. The Nationalists had driven a very thin wedge through the scrub oak fields of the Casa de Campo abutting on the Manzanares, just at the city limits, where on the opposite bank the University City, that magnificent collection of hospitals, laboratories, and lecture rooms built by King Alfonso, spreads itself on the hill between the Iron Gates and the Paseo de Rosales

The Legionaries holding this narrow passage had Reds on the right, clustered in the rows of workmen's dwellings near the Segovia Bridge. They had Reds to their left, occupying the whole of the Casa de Campo as far as Partridge Hill, the rise along which the main Corunna road leaves Madrid. They had also Reds behind them in the Casa de Campo at Humera, and back as far as the persistently annoying Red camps at Boadilla del Monte, Pozuelo, and Aravaca. When they were shelled, they were under fire from three directions at the same time.

Something like this situation prevailed likewise on the extreme right of the Nationalist lines near the Toledo bridge and on the eastern side of the Cerro de los Angeles. Both on the left and the right flanks fighting was continuous throughout the greater part of November, December and January, and though naturally there was a certain amount of ebb and flow, it must be said that the Reds did not at any moment make appreciable gains. On the other hand, though the Nationalists did make some progress, they could not strike a decisive blow, and military experts might well ask the question whether it would not

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have been wiser policy to economise all these efforts for one big push months later.

One thing, perhaps, might have been visible, and that was that on the left flank the capture of Boadilla del Monte and the approaches to the Corunna road should have preceded any move against Madrid proper. A Nationalist offensive from the base line, Brunete-Casa de Campo, made in November might have been successful without much loss, as at that moment the international brigades were not so numerous, and many batteries of Red artillery and battalions of tanks had only just been disembarked at Valencia, and were not available at the front.

Instead, an attack on the University City was chosen as the next move. It was brilliantly carried out, it was heroically persisted in, but it was only another failure. Those streets of Madrid which proved an impenetrable barrier from the Segovia Bridge to the Toledo Bridge were equally strongly fortified on the fringe of the Western Park and of the gardens of the University City. Legionaries and Moors day after day made forlorn attempts to reach the Montana barracks or to pass the Northern railway station, but each time they were forced to fall back. Every house was a machine-gun redoubt. Had the whole quarter been reduced to ruins—and that is what was finally the fate of most of the streets in the Arguelles district and along the Paseo de Rosales—the Reds could have still opposed that fatal machine-gun barrage which cost so many lives in November and December.

From the Casa de Campo it was possible to watch the initial stages of the Nationalist offensive against the University City, commanded by Colonel Asensio with the support of another column under Lieut-Col. Barron.

But the best description is that given me by one of Asensio's staff officers who also gave me ample details as to the subsequent situation within the city.

"Our column," he told me, "which consisted of two banderas of Legionaries and two tabors of Moroccans, was formed on an extremely narrow front not more than five hundred yards broad. That was the only safe front we had, and therefore it was arranged that the attack should be made by one bandera in front with one tabor following, and that the other two units were to be held in reserve on the western bank of the Manzanares to await events.

"We then moved up to the low wall dividing this part of the Casa de Campo from the Manzanares. At this time of the year there was very little water in the river, but it formed a deep ditch with steep banks on either side rendering it a formidable obstacle under machine-gun fire. Then came the rising ground, a Red trench, and again a big red-brick building, barricaded and sandbagged, the Faculty of Letters. That was the first objective assigned to us.

"Our artillery had been battering the banks of the Manzanares for an hour, and Colonel Asensio at eight o'clock in the morning had three batteries of four-inch trench mortars brought up for a final whirlwind bombardment of the Red positions immediately in front of us.

"The Reds undoubtedly knew of our intention to attack, for a stream of machine-gun bullets was constantly chipping the bricks on the crest of the wall. But our engineers were preparing a neat passage for us which we thought would surprise the enemy. They had placed dynamite cartridges along it for about one hundred yards, and at Colonel Asensio's signal the fuses were lit and the

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whole mass of wall fell outwards, on to the slope leading down to the river, in an immense cloud of smoke. The explosion was the signal for our advance, and the bricks had hardly ceased falling when in eight single files we dashed out of the gap thus formed to spread out slightly in a fan shape and make the assault. Colonel Asensio himself, grey-haired but agile and upright as a young man, with a stick in his hand, was easily first, and he maintained his lead until he was well on the other side of the Manzanares. He had jumped straight down from the bank into the water, and a split second later was climbing up the opposite bank. A breathless rush took us to the Red trench which we entered simultaneously at eight points, to find it empty. The Reds had fled. The explosion and the unexpected fall of the wall had intrigued the Red machine-gunners, who ducked down in their shelters wondering what was going to happen next. Their fire so far slackened that we only lost two killed and four wounded in this preliminary assault. Our men were then deployed, and five minutes afterwards we were in the Faculty of Letters, turning the Red machine-guns on the fleeing foe. It was the most hectic ten minutes I have ever passed."

Afterwards, however, the University City, the lecture halls, the huge laboratories, the immense Clinical Hospital, the research buildings, great blocks of red brick with white stone facings standing each isolated from the other in hundreds of acres of laid-out grounds, had to be captured bit by bit. The Clinical Hospital for days was divided between the Nationalists and the Reds. The latter had to be bombed out or smoked out, floor by floor, and casualties in the process were very high and not on the Red side only. Communication with the rear

was extremely hazardous. Not only were the Nationalist positions in the Casa de Campo on the west bank of the Manzanares being continually attacked, but the wooden bridge erected at nights by the engineers to link the two banks was directly enfiladed by two Red machine-gun posts and was also the target for a great deal of artillery fire, most of it fortunately very inaccurate. In the day-time, the bringing up of supplies or reinforcements, and the evacuation of the wounded could only be done in armoured cars. At night, it was possible to cross on foot in the interval of machine-gun bursts, provided one ran very fast.

At the outset, in the grounds of the University City itself it was barely possible to move from the shelter of one building to another without great risk and, finally, it was found necessary to dig communication trenches linking all the Nationalist positions, while at the same time a complete system of front-line trenches with barbed wire was prepared, facing the Western Park and the Arguelles quarter of Madrid. But this was much later, when the hope of piercing to the heart of Madrid from the University City itself had been abandoned for the wiser scheme of a broad, sweeping, encircling move which would force the enemy to evacuate the city so as not to be cut off and trapped.

In these November and December days, cold at nights but often with wonderful sunny mornings and afternoons, the whole idea was that, using the University City as a *place d'armes*, the Nationalist leaders could penetrate east to the Glorietta des Cuatro Caminos, and south to the heights of the Paseo de Rosales and the ill-fated Montana barracks, and thus gain control of Madrid. From Cuatro Caminos broad, wide avenues lead to the



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south-east of Madrid and to the Retiro Park, and anybody who could penetrate by these straight thoroughfares would isolate the Red defenders of the bridge-heads.

Day after day, from various high houses abutting on the Casa de Campo, I was able to follow the fight. Once in late December, when the advance was nearly completely held up, I was even able to cross the bridge and dodge about in the University grounds until I could see the immense star-shaped mass of grey-brown bricks and masonry, all that was left of the burnt-out model prison, with, round it, standing stark and naked, the empty shells of what were formerly fine eight-story buildings. From the barricades built here and there in that wilderness of destruction came shot and shell at every minute. The procedure for attack was nearly always the same. There would be a hurricane bombardment, and then there would come roaring overhead the Nationalist bombing 'planes, huge three-engined affairs, each capable of carrying one ton of bombs. The fighting squadrons watching for Red 'planes would be circling high overhead, tiny specks barely visible until they turned and swooped, when they would shine in the sun. Then through glasses the bombs could be seen to fall. Like shining exclamation marks they would sway from side to side as they fell. There would be a dozen, fifteen, or twenty in the air at one time. Below would be the Paseo de Rosales, that terrace of tall buildings just on the other side of the Manzanares and the centre of Red resistance. Then the first crash, and after that a gigantic roll of drums, as explosion followed explosion. Great black clouds with dull red cores were rising sky high, as flash after flash showed where 250 lb. bombs were rending stone from stone and sending buildings toppling. During one bombardment, in which

thirty bombers took part, I was watching from the roof of a house belonging to General Cabanellas, the President of the Nationalist Junta de Guerra. This stands at least three thousand yards from the Paseo de Rosales, and yet as the bombs exploded it shook as if there had been an earthquake. What must have been the effect in the Paseo de Rosales and along the transverse streets facing the University City where the bombs were actually falling! When, however, the smoke lifted, the ruins appeared much the same, except that here and there a cloud of smoke would show that another fire had been started. Madrid these days was never without half a dozen fires burning themselves out in all this western quarter of the city. But of actual change in the situation there was none. The Legionaries and the Moors found this to their cost every time they tried an attack. They might progress fifty yards or so, they might capture a block-house, but machine-guns would appear from their deep dug-outs, mortars would resume their rain of bombs, and the attack would fizzle out. It would have needed ten times the number of bombing 'planes the Nationalists possessed, executing three raids a day for over a week, to make any impression on the Red defences in this sector. It takes an immense amount of explosives to demolish well-built houses, and ten times as much again to reach cellars and underground dug-outs.

The house of General Cabanellas became one of our accustomed observation-posts, and though it must have been obvious to the Red artillery observers that this was so, they only shelled it on one or two occasions, doing extremely little damage. To those who remembered how any suspicious point was always flattened to the ground during the Great War, this supine attitude on

the part of the Red artillery would have been surprising but for the reflection that the shortage of both shells and guns necessitated the restriction of fire orders to the more important functions of repelling or preparing attack, as the case might be. We had our impromptu picnics; some were satisfied with cold fare—sandwiches, eggs or sardines—but others, and especially the Spanish officers, preferred something hot, and so fires would be lit, sending sparks and smoke pouring out of the chimneys while stews were being cooked or sausages fried. It was a lazy life for the time being, but everybody feared that at any moment the miracle might happen, the Red resistance might collapse, the gallant Legionaries might find a solution to the problem of how to fight their way through streets when every house was a fortified redoubt, and none of us could afford to be absent in such an event. There were bridge parties and there was also chess, while many simply took out the General's deck-chairs—his house, though intact, had been looted from cellar to roof by the Reds—and basked in the December sun. There were two little dogs running about the place. One black mongrel, very small, very old and frightened, would come out of her hiding-place to take a little food. The other, a yellow puppy with clumsy paws, was a war victim, a fragment of shell having cut her head, blinding the poor animal in one eye. Earlier in the war we had taken dogs back and found them homes, but by now there were very strict rules about this, and all dogs found wandering at the front were to be shot at sight, as it was feared they would spread hydrophobia and other diseases. We were only able to save the lives of these two animals by shutting them in the grounds of the villa and leaving them sufficient food and water every time we went back to Talavera or Avila.

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The dog problem was indeed acute at one time. Abandoned by their owners, they had often formed in savage bands and would roam the country looking for food. They were known to have adopted the habit of disinterring dead bodies, and it became necessary to get rid of them all. I remember one night, walking back to my car in the Casa de Campo, having to chase off half a dozen huge brutes circling round a very frightened donkey which they had evidently picked out as affording the prospect of a good meal.

The Legionaries and Moors probably lost in the fighting in and around the University City at least as many men as they did in the whole of their advance on Toledo and Madrid. It was a costly gamble, and one that the Nationalists lost.

There are many anecdotes as to life and death in the City. When the Legionaries first occupied the research buildings they found a large number of rabbits, pigs, fowls, guinea-pigs and other animals in cages, runs, and stables. Food supplies were not coming up very rapidly, and in twelve hours the whole place had been swept clean and everywhere satisfied Legionaries were sitting picking bones and washing down their meal with coarse red wine. At that moment a runner dashed up from General Varela with an urgent dispatch ordering that on no account were the troops to touch these animals as all of them were being used for research purposes and all of them had been inoculated with various diseases, the one more horrible than the other. It was too late, and the officer in command merely sent for the regimental medical officer, so that, without saying anything to frighten the men, he could keep them under observation. It is General Varela who tells the story, and he ends by

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saying, "Only one man was taken ill, and he suffered from lead poisoning, having been shot in the stomach."

The Reds at the outset kept six Russian tanks in the Western Park with which they made frequent sorties and raids into the centre of the University City. "It was annoying," one of Colonel Yague's staff, a stout, elderly major, told me, "to be taken by surprise by one of these visitors. One of them chased me twice round one of the hospital pavilions before I could find a doorway to take shelter in. I had only my revolver with me, and all I could do was to keep a corner of the building between me and the great lumbering monster, which was, so I thought at the time, making straight after me. On subsequent reflection, I doubt whether its driver had even seen me, but at the moment I was very breathless." But the Legionaries had by this time found ways of dealing with these tanks. They carried petrol bottles, which they threw under the tanks, and thus burning out the rubber wheels that keep the caterpillar treads distended, brought the tanks to a standstill. Many tanks were disabled in the University City, and finally the Reds withdrew them from that sector for more advantageous service in the open field.

The next manœuvre of the Reds was to adopt an extensive policy of mining. In the University City two pavilions of the Clinical Hospital one day went up in the air. The Nationalist engineers could not understand it at first, as it was quite impossible for the Reds to have mined so far. Somebody then thought of the immense new system of sewers which was being built for the new quarters north of the University. A manhole was quickly found and a squad of Legionaries sent down. They found Red miners working, driving another gallery under

another building, and charging at them with the bayonet wiped them out. There was much desultory fighting in these huge drains until the Nationalists drove the Reds completely out and then blew up the passages leading into the city.

Other Reds made a similar attempt in Carabanchel, south of Madrid, but were captured. In the same quarter they hewed an immense gallery over five hundred yards long, intending to blow up the Nationalist barricade which dominated the Toledo Bridge. Colonel Tella's engineers had warning of this attempt, however, from a deserter, and, when the Reds were not working, pierced a gallery of their own right under the Red sap. Explosives were brought and tamped down, and the counter-mine was set off, just at the moment the Red miners were bringing up their own charges. There was a terrific series of explosions, and that Red mine ceased to exist.

The situation at the end of November was one of stalemate within the University City. The Nationalists could not advance, try they ever so, and on the other hand the Reds could not drive them out. The situation was one of danger, however, for the Nationalists, as their communications with the rear depended on so narrow a passage with the possibility of Red attacks from three quarters simultaneously. That the Reds did not profit more from this is extraordinary.

It is easy to reason after the event and to say that the attack on Madrid from the front ought never to have been made, or that the troops ought to have been withdrawn once the attack failed. As regards the first proposition there was, in the early days of November, a reasonable possibility that a series of surprise attacks might win through. The withdrawal after failure might

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have been the best military solution, but it was politically impossible, as the Nationalist situation throughout Spain would have suffered from so open a confession of failure. It was therefore necessary to retain the University City position at any cost, pending further operations which would link it more securely to the left flank of the Nationalist army. It has often been found in Spanish military history that operations have been conducted with great ease, and then suddenly in some city the fiercest resistance has developed. It was so in the days of the Carthaginians and the Romans, illustrated by the historic sieges of Saguntum and Numantia; it was so during the middle ages, and again in the days of Napoleon. The Spaniard is a desperate fighter behind walls, the fatalism which so many have inherited from the Moorish strain—the normal result of the centuries of Moorish rule over the central plateau—serving them well in such a form of fighting.

Once more the attention of General Franco's staff was turned to the Brunete-Casa de Campo road as the basis for a fresh attack northwards calculated to clear away Red resistance from Boadilla del Monte and take the front line as far as the Corunna road. It took some time before such an attack could be adequately prepared.

The tangle, meantime, of the lines all round Madrid, and especially in the Casa de Campo, was such that it became very dangerous to motor up to any part of the front line—of the exact position of which one was ignorant—for fear of driving right into the Red forces. There were no continuous lines of any kind, and the defence posts placed on roads leading to Red positions were often in ignorance as to whether there were not further Nationalist defence points ahead of them, and so they did not always stop cars driving past them at full speed.

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A typical instance was when I was driving to the front with my French friend d'Hospital. We had a young Spanish guide with us from the Avila Press bureau. He confessed, however, that he did not know the road and asked us to go in front. We were then heading for Getafé towards the Toledo Bridge. Both of us insisted on driving slowly with frequent pauses to consult our maps and to inspect the horizon. There were few soldiers about and, as so often happens in war, none of them knew anything about the position of the advanced lines. "Colonel Tella's column," they said, "advanced this morning, we don't know how far he has gone." Our Spanish guide came up to ask why we were waiting, and said, "Let us drive on quickly and we will inquire at Carabanchel Bajo as to where we can find Colonel Tella." He was somewhat confused when I pointed out that if we drove on fast, as he suggested, we would not be reaching Carabanchel at all but the Red lines at the Toledo Bridge. The poor young fellow had misread his map. We went on very slowly, d'Hospital getting out and walking forward over every slight rise. Finally we drew up our cars about two thousand yards from the bridge-head. We were at Colonel Tella's headquarters, the front line was about one hundred yards away, and the Reds not five hundred yards farther on. Fortunately we had been screened from view by a row of plane trees and a six-foot bank.

We went forward and, looking through a loopholed wall, could see the Red positions on the railway sidings. Colonel Tella himself joined us a few minutes later. Tall and handsome, his face was patched with plaster where he had received cuts from fragments of a tank shell. He was courteous, but not too pleased that four large cars should



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have been brought right up to his headquarters, and we had to tell our chauffeurs to turn the cars and take them back past the level crossing in the rear where they were effectively out of sight behind a fold in the ground. The Colonel laughed when he heard how cautiously we had come, and said, "You were quite right. I have not barricaded or cut the road, and if you had been travelling fast you would have run right into the Red positions on the bridgehead."

Not so many weeks afterwards I was in the Casa de Campo when we learnt that a car containing four Spanish journalists, including the director of the *Heraldo de Aragon* and a South American journalist, had been captured by the Reds on the road to Pozuelo. They had missed the line of Press cars and, entering the Casa de Campo, had taken the wrong turning with disastrous results.

A final warning that the roads were not always secure came in January, when three Press cars were driving from Avila to the front along the Brunete road. There had been Red counter-attacks for weeks in that particular neighbourhood, and several of us evinced surprise that we should be taken by such a route. However, nothing happened until we actually arrived at Brunete. There I noticed at once that the village was in a state of defence, and that two field-guns were pointing straight down the road along which we had come. We did not stop to make inquiries but, branching off to the right, continued towards the safety of Navalcarnero deep behind the Nationalist lines. On the way we passed two tabors of Moorish infantry, and when we reached Navalcarnero we learnt that a minute or so after we had passed the cross-roads Russian tanks had appeared and had actually held

the road for about a quarter of an hour until the Red infantry attack was repulsed and two of the tanks captured. It was a narrow shave.

In the same way Reds often drove across into the Nationalist front lines, and three British and American newspapermen, including Mr Weaver, of the *News Chronicle*, came bowling one day along the road between Madrid and Aranjuez and were promptly made prisoners. In this case they were dealt with sympathetically, and after being questioned were sent to the French frontier. The same treatment was accorded an honorary attaché of the British embassy in Madrid, Mr. E. C. Lance, and the sub-director of the Anglo-South American bank, Mr. William Hale, who also lost their way and wandered into the lines held by General Varela

It was about this time that the Reds made an attempt, the first for many months, to show initiative by dealing a blow which might have changed the character of the war. They brought a body of troops and artillery to Navahermosa and Los Navalmorales, south of Talavera de la Reina and on the left bank of the Tagus, and on November 24 launched what purported to be a lightning attack on the town. For weeks afterwards the Red communiqué, incidentally repeated by the B.B.C. in their news bulletins, announced the capture of Talavera by the Reds. Had this been so it would have been an extremely severe blow for General Franco. The main road of communication between the Madrid front and the rest of the country would have been cut, and all traffic would have had to be diverted to a single mountainous road via Avila. Huge supplies of stores and equipment would have been lost and, granted that the Reds were in numbers and prepared to put up a fight, with the river at their backs,

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they might have thrown General Franco's Madrid army into a state of considerable confusion.

I was at the time sleeping on one of the top floors of Talavera's main hotel, the Española. Previous bombardments had hit the roof, there were no window panes in my room, which was very draughty, while the next-door room had been completely wrecked by a shell. There, early in the morning, I was awakened by a persistent knocking at the door. It was the chauffeur Juan, who had come to tell me that the Reds were swarming down towards the Tagus and that three of their batteries were then shelling the town. Juan added: "I have got the car ready on the Avila road, and if the Reds do cross the river and enter the town we can always get away in time." I complimented him on his thoughtfulness, but said that I did not think there would be any need to run.

I could now hear the sounds of shells bursting quite clearly, though they were obviously being directed to the east of the town near the flying-field. On my way to the roof of the hotel, whence a fine view could be obtained, I met a Spanish staff officer, who appeared surprisingly calm, considering that the information he had to impart was that there were only some three hundred ill-trained militia in the town, and two heavy mortars which would take at least an hour to put in battery. From the roof it was easy to see the cliff rising steeply from the river. On the left-hand side there were the white buildings of an old farm-house, while on the right the road from Los Navalmorales could just be distinguished. A line of tiny dots moving through the brushwood on the cliff side showed where the Red advance guard and scouts were, and it was evident that they were already under a hot fire from the militia machine-gun posts on our side of the

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Tagus and on the very fringe of the town, which here runs right down to the river.

It was then about eight o'clock in the morning. It was a dull November day, the sun obscured behind a sort of grey mist through which its pale yellow rays filtered only occasionally, while low on the horizon were the pitch-black clouds foretelling a storm.

Fully half an hour passed, the intermittent shelling gradually coming nearer until some of the shells were flying right overhead to pitch behind us on the station road. The Reds did not seem to be making much progress, and nobody could understand why their artillery was firing at random instead of registering on the bridge-heads and on the Nationalists' machine-gun posts and then keeping on those targets while an assault was being prepared. It is true that there seemed too little artillery to give the infantry sufficient backing for the crossing of a wide and fairly rapid stream, and the question might have been asked why the infantry assault had not been made without the preliminary warning of an ineffectual bombardment at the break of day. Down below in the streets I could hear harsh words of military command, and a company of militia hurriedly withdrawn from guard at the station and along the railway line went by at a swinging double down towards the river. That made another hundred men, and it seemed certain that four hundred men with rifles and machine-guns ought to be able to hold the passage of the river against so undecided a foe.

We kept searching the crest of the cliff with our glasses for signs of the enemy main forces. Twice three horsemen rode into our line of vision and then disappeared towards the white farm-house. Then there came a line of

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motor-lorries which did the same thing. The two last lorries had been converted into armoured cars.

Suddenly a woman on the roof cried out: "Look there!" and pointed to the Gredos hills behind us. There, in the grey sky, flying low, were squadron after squadron of heavy bombing 'planes, small chaser 'planes preceding them or flying on either side. Soon the roar of their engines was plainly audible and they passed directly overhead, reaching the Red positions on the cliff a second or so later. Followed volcances of black smoke and bursts of flame. First they were on the cliff's edge, showing us how near the mass of the enemy's infantry had come, and then they centred round the white farm-house. Round and round the bombing 'planes circled, dropping bomb after bomb and, when they had no more, flying off for fresh supplies. Meanwhile the chaser 'planes had not been idle. They had formed themselves into an infernal *farandole*, appearing and disappearing through the black clouds and the blacker smoke left by the bomb explosions. The *farandole* of 'planes started high up in the clouds and then swept down, low down, over the road and the farm-house, their machine-guns spitting flame as they did so. Then on the other side of the smoke, the chain of 'planes, visible once more, rose in a great left-hand sweep as the chasers regained height, still keeping their positions in the endless line and then, veering, dived once more to carry on their task.

For just one hour and a half this manœuvre of bombing and machine-gunning went on, and then a dull roar and a great flash of flame in a garden beneath us showed that the two heavy mortars had got to work. By ten o'clock the 'planes had gone, the mortars had resumed their silence, the tiny dots we had once seen on the cliff side,

long obscured by mist and smoke, had disappeared, and all was calm and quiet. The Red attack had been repulsed. That night the Red wireless complacently announced how far they had chased the Nationalists from Talavera de la Reina and how many of their battalions held the town. There was cheering and rejoicing among the Reds in Madrid, but there was cursing and confusion among the Reds at Los Navalmorales, where the real state of affairs was known.

Some days later I was allowed to view the battle-field. Two hundred dead, I was told, had already been burnt or buried, and yet bodies strewed the fields and the roads in every direction. There were two batteries of artillery with wheels smashed and muzzles pointing skywards, there were burnt and damaged lorries by the score. Immense craters showed where the bombs had fallen—here next to a battery, there in a concentration of men. The files of men shot down by machine-gun fire were obviously trying to reach their line of motor transport. The lorries were trying in vain to turn when bombs fell among them. It was a disaster. From every sign it was evident that the attacking force must have numbered some three thousand men, while its total casualties in dead and wounded must have accounted for at least one half that force. So terror-stricken were the Reds that, I was told, they evacuated Los Navalmorales that afternoon and fled some twenty miles farther south, fearing they might be followed up by a light mobile Nationalist column. The latter, however, who had no orders for pushing far south of the Tagus, contented themselves with holding the heights and digging during the next few days a line of trenches to prevent any future danger of a surprise assault.

For weeks afterwards it was arranged that troops resting

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from the line should do so in echelon along the Tagus so that ample forces would always be available if the Reds were to renew their offensive.

The air arm had thus been rapidly mobilised and had crushed a dangerous attack entirely by itself and without the necessity of waiting for the much slower arrival of infantry and artillery. How far this can be taken as a lesson for future warfare depends solely on the fact that the Red column, never dreaming of an air counter-attack, had no anti-aircraft guns with them. Perhaps, also, the latest model of electrically fired and controlled Russian anti-aircraft gun, used later round Madrid, was not then in Red possession. This and other modern anti-aircraft guns, used by the Nationalists, have proved so deadly to low-flying aircraft that it would seem doubtful if it could be hoped that the air arm would always have such instantaneous success. The effect of anti-aircraft guns of great speed, range, and accuracy, was later such that it appeared that wherever these guns were in sufficient numbers bombing 'planes would have to fly at such a height as would render accurate bombing and accurate observation extremely difficult.

It was evident that the Reds had been kept carefully informed of the number of men in garrison at Talavera de la Reina, for it could not have been a mere coincidence that they attacked just on the day when there were only a few militiamen in the town. It had been noticed, also, that the Red air raids, which were frequent, only took place when the Nationalist chaser 'planes were not in the vicinity. This naturally led to a strict search for spies, not only at Talavera, but also in other centres.

For many miles the Tagus, ill guarded, formed the only line of demarcation between the Reds and the Nationalists,

and it was obviously easy for any determined man who had obtained valuable information to swim across and take his news to the nearest Red telephone post. It was realised how this was being done, as it was known that many Red sympathisers remained in Talavera and its vicinity. Counter-espionage officers were hurried into the area, a stricter control of the movements of peasants and townsfolk was instituted, and a number of alleged spies were quickly captured. Some of them were removed to some central prison; others were tried, many were shot. Among the accused were a doctor and two pretty nurses from the Red Cross hospital. The doctor, I know, was shot, but I could not find out what happened to the nurses.

It was only a little later that three very daring spies, one young girl of nineteen—a probationary school-teacher—and two young men were caught in the daring act of maintaining a secret short-wave wireless transmitter at Salamanca itself, not a thousand yards from General Headquarters.

Suspicion first attached to one of the two young men who had managed to join the Spanish Falangist organisation. Ill-health prevented him from being sent to a fighting unit and he was able to remain behind in Salamanca and, mixing with his comrades and at cafés, he undoubtedly picked up a great deal of valuable information. Headquarters counter-espionage service knew that there was considerable leakage, and the money carelessly spent by this young man entertaining soldiers back from the front, and clerks and messengers from the headquarters offices, attracted some attention. The first inquiry seemed to absolve him from all suspicion, and it was only as a precautionary measure that it was resolved to keep an



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occasional watch on him. Weeks went by and nothing happened to revive suspicions. The young man led a regular life, was not seen to consort with anybody suspicious, and was of a pious disposition, going regularly to church, even in the week.

It was at church, however, that the first real clue was found. One of the counter-espionage agents noticed that twice when the young man left his place on a faldstool next to a pillar, a young and very beautiful girl about twenty came and knelt in prayer at the same place, but that she appeared while so doing to be taking a piece of paper from under the cushion. The detective normally would have dismissed this as a lovers' stratagem, but he felt in the circumstances that it would be well to find out who the girl was. She was followed, and when her identity was established it was found that at the school where she had passed out as a probationary teacher she held very advanced views, and it was for that reason that, since the Civil War, her services had been dispensed with by the scholastic authorities.

It was obvious that the closest investigation was necessary. Half a dozen of the most skilled secret service agents under the command of an officer were put on the trail. The young Falangist church-goer met two soldiers fresh from the front who, carelessly, over glasses of Manzanilla, told him the exact moves of two important columns. The young man duly went to church, but before the pretty blonde arrived, his message was taken, photographed, and put back in place. The first check which, incidentally, was a confirmation of the theory that dangerous spies were at work, was that the note was found to be in cipher.

It was evident that the girl was the second link in a

chain of espionage, and to find out how the news was sent on to the Reds it was necessary not to frighten her but to watch her all the time and see what she did with the messages left by the young man. After being shadowed it was found that with another young fellow, an apprentice at an electrical engineer's, she frequently went to the Salamanca cemetery. The couple were seen three times going in late in the evening, but each time by chance shook off their followers, who did not see them leave. Inquiry was made discreetly of the cemetery attendants, two of whom said they frequently came at night, and two others that they were always there early in the morning. The immediate conclusion was that the couple hid somewhere all night in the cemetery and used it as the base for wireless communications with the Reds. A search was ordered and after three hours the problem was solved.

As in many Spanish cemeteries, Salamanca has a great wall in which are pierced, somewhat like a honeycomb, a series of small cavities, each large enough to contain one coffin. The spies had entered an empty vault and had cut a small doorway through the stone slab connecting it with the next cavity which had its coffin. They had then completely cut down the slabs connecting the next three cavities, and piling the old and crumbling coffins together in a corner, thus provided a small free area in which they placed a short-wave transmission set which, by crouching down, they could work. The power was obtained by tapping the electric light supply wires of an empty villa standing just outside the cemetery and bringing the current through the walls to the vaults.

The scheme of the Red spies was almost perfect. Nobody, they thought, would ever look into vaults which each had its coffin, and by never meeting the men who

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provided the information they thought they had covered themselves in the event of any accidental betrayal.

The three of them were arrested an hour after the discovery in the cemetery. A few slips in code containing military information were found. One of them only, however, was in the handwriting of the young man whose activities had first aroused suspicions. The young girl, evidently the main mover in the plot, refused indignantly to betray for any consideration who were her other assistants. After a court martial they were all three shot. An attempt was made for a little while to transmit false news to the Reds so they might believe nothing had been found out, but it soon became apparent that the Reds paid no attention to the messages. It was evident, therefore, that either there was a secret password prefixed to every message, or else the undetected members of the organisation had managed to get a warning through to their headquarters.

At Brihuega, when the Nationalist troops entered the town in March, they found a very similar plan to send news to the Reds, who were even then preparing the series of formidable counter-attacks which were to hold up for so long the attack on the sectors east of Madrid. By this time expert wireless engineers with each army were entrusted with the task of detecting illicit transmission. They found that somebody was talking in code to the Reds from a small village just outside Brihuega, but a close search failed to reveal anything that looked at all suspicious. A chance remark by a child, "I must take a sausage to teacher," disclosed the secret. It was known that the woman schoolmistress was a Red, and as she was missing it was thought she had gone away. The child was therefore questioned and, bursting into tears, he

explained that the schoolmistress had hidden herself in the village bread-oven and that she had told him and two others that they were to bring her food every night and tell her all that was happening in the near-by town.

The Government troops, she had told them, would soon be back, and if they betrayed her or failed to do her bidding their families would be taken out and shot. The children, who had already seen so many Red atrocities, were terrorised and did all she bade them. She was shot on the very day that the Red troops returned, as she had said they would, and were fighting the Nationalists just outside Brihuega. But for a child's careless remark having been overheard she could have got away and joined them.

There were these and many other genuine instances of spy activities, and there were undoubtedly many who got away and were never discovered. But there also existed for some time an unpleasant spy mania, such as grows up in war time in any country. There were also a number of malicious accusations. It was amusing so many years after the Great War to see posted those warnings against indiscreet conversation which had been seen everywhere in Great Britain and France during 1914-18.

It must in justice be remembered that many espionage services were busy, and that all the information was not necessarily being reserved for the Reds on the one side or the Nationalists on the other. The very latest weapons of war were being used on both sides, tanks and anti-tank guns, aeroplanes and anti-aircraft guns, to take two examples. They were being used in actual conditions of war, and it was of great concern not only to the nations which provided these weapons to know how they were being used, but also to their rivals. Spain must, therefore,

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have been full of the secret agents of half a dozen different powers. Agents striving to protect their own secrets and agents trying to detect others' secrets must have rubbed shoulders from one end of Spain to the other. There was so much to guard and so much to detect.

The value of the Spanish war to military experts has obviously been great. Though small numbers of men have been engaged—that is, small in comparison with the immense armies that a future world war would entail—they have been, especially in the later stages, amply supplied with all the death-dealing apparatus of modern war, save gas. The machine-gun, for instance, has shown once again that she is queen of the battlefield. It takes a great deal of skill, of artillery, and of tanks, to overcome a position well defended with automatic weapons. Artillery has shown so far little improvement, except in range and in mobility. The tank has been vastly improved, and there have been medium, light-medium, and whippet tanks in quantity. As far as I know, however, none of the tank mastodons, thirty to forty-ton monsters, have been seen on Spanish soil. They are all formidable weapons, specially designed to destroy the machine-gun crew, but they have all met with a terrible enemy. Fire from petrol canisters, hand grenades and, above all, the terrible anti-tank gun. This gun, small and easily moved, can take shelter anywhere and does not seem much bigger than a wheel-barrow. Yet it can throw its shell three thousand yards, and at the range when it usually engages a tank, about eight hundred to a thousand yards, it puts two shells out of three on its target. It is sufficient to have seen tanks brought to a standstill by a shell from one of these guns to realise its stopping power. Whenever one of these guns and one, two, or even three tanks are

confronted, the odds normally are in favour of the gun. It is small, stationary, and hidden. The tanks are large and mobile, and have at some time or other normally to come over a sky-line. At that moment the gun opens fire at very great speed. If its crew works well, and unless by some chance one of the tanks happens to spot it at once, the whole three are doomed. Of course in warfare on a large scale it is probable that tanks would only be sent out in numbers after a preliminary bombardment with heavier tanks behind them putting up a barrage so as to disconcert anti-tank gun crews and keep them from being in a position of watchful observation until too late. But the anti-tank gun has definitely come to stay in the modern army as a weapon to accompany at least every battalion, if not every company.

These conclusions were visible from the ordinary observations of any war correspondent who himself had had any experience of military matters. I always took the greatest care never to intrude into what were obviously private affairs, or to notice and mark the calibre of guns, the size and weight of tanks or their speed, or the type of aeroplanes and the emplacement of anti-aircraft guns. I could not see that such secret technical details would be of interest to newspaper readers. When the military history of the Spanish Civil War comes to be written—and there are many, not necessarily Spanish, who will try their hand at it—the historians will probably have a wealth of detail on matters now secret, but which owing to lapse of time will by then have become public property. In Spain, at least, it is best not to be ahead of one's time.

## IX

### THE ATTACKS ON THE CORUNNA ROAD WEST OF MADRID

DECEMBER 1936-JANUARY 1937

#### THE JARAMA AND GUADALAJARA

THERE followed, after the setbacks on the Madrid front, a period of many weeks of desultory fighting. The Reds counter-attacked here and there, but without much effect, while the Nationalists dug themselves in, prepared winter quarters and ranged the market gardens in their possession round Madrid for winter vegetables, and especially cabbages, which are grown in immense quantities.

This innocent pillaging—the owners of the market gardens were either dead or far away and the vegetables would have rotted in the ground—was the cause of an unhappy incident which plunged a brigade of Falangist militia into mourning. All the way from Merida there had marched with one of the Falangist regiments a happy and bright young girl, with raven-black hair and flashing eyes, known as Juanita. She was a good girl and looked after the men of her regiment like an elder sister. She mended as much of their clothing as her busy needle could attend to, she looked after their kitchen, and when there was any food to be obtained in a village she saw that her Falangists got it, and that is a difficult task when one is marching with such experienced foragers as the Legionaries and the Regulares. When there was a

fight she tended the wounded, and many a blue-shirted Falangist has laid his head on her lap, held her hand and whispered, "Mother," as he drew his dying breath.

I spoke to many of her men after her death, and there was not one who did not take off his blue forage cap and stand with bent head as he spoke of the "heroine" of the regiment. One night her men were in the front line in Carabanchel. There was not much doing, only a shot from time to time, but the food was poor and scanty. Juanita had the day before brought up the kitchen equipment to a little sunken road some hundred yards back. A bright fire was burning, but there was little to cook. Calling for two volunteers with sacks, she told them she would go back to the vegetable gardens behind Leganes and bring up cabbages, carrots, and other vegetables which would help to make a hot stew. The three started out across the fields when there came a sudden burst of machine-gun fire, which sent them all tumbling down for shelter. The machine-gun continued to stutter its message of death at intervals, while the two men and the girl lay close to the damp brown earth. Finally she turned and said: "We must be moving, or else we will be too late to bring the stuff back in time for the boys' dinner." With that she draped the sacks over her shoulders as a rough camouflage and, getting up, began to run forward. There was another burst of fire and she fell, never to rise again. It was at nightfall they brought her body in. It was three days later, when her regiment had been relieved, that she was buried, and her coffin was carried by her boys to the cemetery, where all stood weeping as, with the rites of the Church, she was committed to her rest. The city of Merida, whence she came, as a token of their esteem for her high and pure character and her



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unstained heroism, is erecting a monument to the gallant Falangist girl, always to be remembered in Spain as Juanita of Merida.

One of the points the Reds continually counter-attacked during this period was the Nationalist line between Villaverde and Pinto, on the extreme right flank, in the angle between the Jarama river and the Tagus. The Reds were in force at Aranjuez and on the left bank of the Jarama, and with easy communications both north and south they could move their forces where they liked to attack the Nationalists, who only held a few scattered posts.

I was present at one of these attacks, a particularly unlucky one for the Reds. It was towards the end of November. A Red brigade moved out to attack Sesena, just north of Aranjuez. The Red attack was supported on its right flank by a small cavalry corps from south of Madrid. The Red advance guard consisted of two trains. The first was armoured. It consisted of three heavily steel-plated trucks. Two were pushed in front of the engine and one was behind it. The front trucks carried two light field-guns each and four machine-guns. Behind this steel-clad monster came, at a distance of several hundred yards, a troop train carrying eight hundred men.

The Nationalist advance posts, when they saw the armoured train come into sight along the line, immediately sent back, by telephone, advice of the impending attack. The armoured train steamed to within a hundred yards of the point where the line had been cut, and then opened fire with its artillery and machine-guns on the whole of the Nationalist positions. Eight hundred yards behind it, hidden by a slope, the transport train stopped, and the Red troops it carried began to deploy, while some

three thousand yards farther back a motor column, carrying a second line of troops and three batteries of artillery, appeared.

But at the moment when the alarm reached the headquarters of General Monasterio, it found the whole of that cavalry corps and its accompanying mechanical units not only very much awake, but actually in marching formation. It had happened that a couple of the cavalry units were being withdrawn that day for a minor operation on the opposite or left flank, and that, General Monasterio having chosen that occasion for an entire regrouping of his forces, all of them were assembled.

The General himself was inspecting a cavalry squadron when an orderly dashed up with the urgent message. There was a sudden grouping of staff officers, all on horseback, while the General dictated his orders. The first sent a battery of horse-drawn artillery, followed by two others drawn by tractors, to a point south of Sesena where, though covered by the slopes, they could direct an intense artillery fire on the railway embankment where the armoured train had come to a stop. Other orders sent squadron after squadron and motor-carried units, the one after the other, hurrying to their places in the line. The attack had begun at eight o'clock in the morning. At half-past eight the first Nationalist shells began to fall round the armoured train. One hit was scored within five minutes on the first protected truck. The shell cut right through the plate and blew up one of the gun turrets. The second truck was hit twice and the locomotive was hit by shell fragments. The Red officer in charge of the armoured train saw he could not bring his one remaining gun to bear on the Nationalist batteries, for the good reason that he did not know where they were.

His own support batteries were still being hauled down from their lorries three thousand yards behind him. So he decided to retire and slowly moved back, the locomotive whistling all the time to signal to the troop train, which was on the same line, to withdraw also. Shells kept dropping round the retiring train and on or near the track, and at nine o'clock both armoured train and troop train were steaming back towards Aranjuez as fast as they could.

Imagine the despair of the Red militia, eight hundred of them. They had deployed in a thin line, were already looking back over their shoulders wondering if the second line and the artillery would soon be arriving, when suddenly they saw dismounted troopers lining the slopes in front of them, while fire from a dozen machine-guns came singing overhead. And then the train which had brought them up and the armoured train on whose guns they had pinned their faith were steaming to the rear as fast as their pistons would take them. It was more than they could stand. Jumping up from hedges, from roadsides, and from ditches, they broke and ran, they ran after the trains, and as the railway line made a curve some of them actually caught them up and a dozen or so were able to scramble on to the trucks of the armoured train. The other was too far ahead. That was the moment I came up from the Pinto road and was able to see the end of the fight. The Nationalist artillery turned on to the Red concentration in the rear and that speedily disappeared, while the front line machine-guns dealt effectively with the runaways from the Red advance guard. About one hundred prisoners were made, and that afternoon three hundred dead bodies were found before the Nationalist lines. When all was over the Red right flank squadron of cavalry appeared, riding leisurely up a ravine, as if they

had come to see what all the firing was about. The speed with which they executed the right-about when they caught sight of the field of battle did credit to their mobility if to nothing else.

There were other less spectacular counter-attacks. In the University City and in the Casa de Campo, hardly a week went by without some bloody surprise attack or raid, but in general we knew little of these except from the laconic versions given in the communiqués on either side or from the news which came back to us a day or so later and therefore too tardily for such local affairs.

There was little at that moment for war correspondents to do. We mused over maps with staff officers and told them what General Franco ought to do to win the war, we talked about past fights and what ought to have been done by either side on half a dozen occasions, and in fact we won the war for either Reds or Nationalists with ease over a dirty café table in Talavera, drinking rather musty Manzanilla or tepid beer. Most of us complained bitterly of the food we were having. The meat and everything else were of quite good quality, but we could not get accustomed to the strong-flavoured oil and the general fashion of cooking. Then we discovered a birthday. It was that of Mr Victor Console, the photographer, and we decided that not only would we have a celebration, but that the Press would cook its own dinner. Half a dozen of us stormed the markets of Talavera; we bought turkeys, fresh soles, cauliflowers, and a host of tinned stuffs, which I remember included mushrooms and truffles. Victor Console had volunteered to make a *sole Marguery*, I had said I would stuff and roast the turkey, while somebody else, I forget who, volunteered to serve the *choufleur au gratin*. The manager of our hotel gave us the

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run of his kitchen, and while we were preparing the meal I remember we had as interested onlookers officers from the Legion and from General Varela's staff.

I had some difficulty about the stuffing. Nobody knew what sausage meat was, and when I looked at the Spanish sausages I realised that their mysterious insides would be of little use to me. So, accompanied by an enthusiastic American helper, Mr. Reynold Packard, of the United Press, I trudged off to the butcher's. There we picked out a large, clean-looking piece of fresh pork and some calves' liver and asked them to put it all through the mincing machine. There was some hesitation about this, and then it was explained that the only sausage machine in the town was out of order. However, the butcher's boy offered to chop it all up on the block, and when he had finished we decided that it was quite minced enough and carried it away. I made a great amount of stuffing, cooked with onions, not a little garlic, two big tins of truffles, and four of mushrooms, and had it all sewn in the turkeys which, though somewhat skinny, were yet young and not tough. I watched the birds very closely when they were put in the oven, each covered with a leaf of pork fat and with a large gobbet of butter in the roasting pan. I watched closely, because I could see the Spanish cook's look of disapproval, and I knew that she was only awaiting my departure to open the oven and pour a "nice pot of hot water round the birds, just to prevent them burning." I heard her say so to the kitchen maid, and when I spoke to her and said "Certainly not," she merely muttered and turned away.

There was work for many hands, including a fruit salad and the preparation for Console's sole. He wanted shrimps and we could only get prawns, he wanted mussels

and there were only large cockles. But we dealt with prawns and cockles while he got ready the sauce, and so the sole, which we all said should be called *sole Talavera*, was prepared. The meal was a great success. We started ten at table, but before we had gone very far we were sixteen, many guests in uniform having readily accepted the invitation to "pot luck." We started with gible soup, and then came the fish with some white Spanish wine somebody had unearthed somewhere. Then the turkeys were served, and there followed the cauliflower and the fruit salad. It was a feast, and never has there been more laughter and good humour. Three of our guests now lie somewhere near University City or Jarama river—good fellows, good companions, and good soldiers. I was told that my turkeys and their stuffing were excellent. Some time later when I gave a repeat performance of my culinary talent at Avila, critics said it was not so good. My modest belief is that the cooking was the same both times, but that we all brought a better appetite to the first occasion.

These journalist dinners were later, in Avila, quite frequent. We had a lady journalist, Mrs. Eleanor Packard, who made us apple-tarts, we had a Frenchman, M. Botto, who cooked the most excellent braised beef and also a gargantuan *pot au feu*, which, from its size and magnificence, will long be remembered. It was brought up steaming hot in no fewer than six dishes—vegetables, meat, ox-tail, calves' head and shin, marrow bones, and boiled chicken, and was served with one of the best brain sauces I have ever tasted. M. Botto was not only a talented journalist, but also a cook of distinction. But I remember seeing one of the Spanish officers among our guests looking at the wasteful piles of provender, and then

remaining silent with an absent air. Many of us fell silent too, for we knew that he was thinking of his aged mother, living in Madrid amid the Red terror, and that he was wondering what she might have on her table.

It was a period of change among the journalists' corps. Many left because they were tired or ill, or because they had been recalled. Others left because the Nationalist Government, or rather that expression of it formed by the Press and propaganda department of Salamanca, so rarely well advised, thought that their absence would be better than their presence. It is seldom that the Press department of any government acts with consistent wisdom, but the inconsistency of the one set up at Salamanca by the Nationalist Government must have created somewhat of a record. Those journalists who were heart and soul in favour of the movement went on working for it, in despite of it. They suffered rebuffs almost without number. Responsible war correspondents could not see any member of the omnipotent Press Bureau at Salamanca without filling in a form and waiting for something like an hour. The details for the obtaining of passes and visas were slow and complicated, and, generally speaking, every conceivable obstacle was placed in the way of the war correspondent in National Spanish territory. Personally, I was better treated than most, perhaps because of the influence of the *Daily Mail*, perhaps because I was better known. Despite this, I can well remember during my frequent spells of waiting in the antechambers of Headquarters at Salamanca, having had time to read the two volumes of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

The pity of it was that, for Nationalist Spain, so much good effort was being wasted. Red propaganda was being better and more speedily handled. Cables containing

Red propaganda, from Madrid or Valencia, were transmitted with a fairly lenient censorship and with a minimum of delay. Our cables took, according to circumstance, often fifteen to twenty hours, never less than four or five. The censorship was often rigorous and rarely consistent. It would ill become me to scoff at the Spanish censors themselves, most of them were my friends, and I had always made it a rule not to dispute a censor's ruling on anything, but to endeavour to change my telegram to meet his views without sacrificing what I thought was essential to the truth of my dispatch. Sometimes this was impossible, and then I withdrew my message altogether. They were not the principal culprits. It was the Central Press Office which issued such strange rulings at such strange times, and gave them to some censors' offices and forgot to give them to others. It was also the fault of the Central Press Office that a proper censorship of newspaper telegrams having been admitted, Press telegrams duly passed were yet subject to other military censorships at relay stations. The result was that a message censored, say at Talavera, might be censored again—with all the inherent delays—at Badajoz. That was the main reason for the fact that the Reds could always claim victories while the true story of what had taken place came twenty-four hours late, or a day after the fact. What chance was there in such conditions of winning world opinion? How can any one wonder with such Press arrangements that, throughout Europe, everybody thought that the Reds were winning the war easily at a moment when really they were being defeated every day?

It is not for me to say who was responsible for such faulty arrangements, but the errors of the organisation were well known in Spain, and there were many who told



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me they regretted that General Franco had not raised the whole department of Press and Propaganda to be a Ministry as in Germany and Italy. Perhaps the easiest time for the Press was at the outset, when we had at Burgos for our guides and advisers Señor Pujol and Count Melgar. Both of them were journalists and both knew the exigencies of our profession.

Apart, there are amusing memories of censors. In preparing an interview with General Franco I had to submit the text of important phrases he had pronounced so that he could make sure his thought had not been betrayed. I had to do this in French, as General Franco does not read English. Once the text had been approved I typed the whole matter out into English and then presented it for the censor's stamp. It came back to me with one alteration. I had copied out the word "catastrophe" in its correct spelling—"catastrophe." The obliging censor, with his perfect knowledge of English, had crossed out the "e" and substituted a "y." It was a splendid piece of work. Another censor I can remember was careful every time I mentioned a "mechanised column" to cross out the word "mechanised" and make it read "mobile," and every time I wrote "mobile" he put his pen through it and wrote "mechanised."

The early days of December were occupied by a ding-dong battle in which the Nationalists, moving forward from the Casa de Campo, stormed the heights round Boadilla del Monte on the left and Pozuelo and Aravaca on the right. This was the beginning of a fight which was to last with brief intermissions until the end of January, and was to cost many thousands of lives. The object of the Nationalists was finally to hold the main Corunna road from the point at Las Rosas where a branch road

forks south for the Escorial, to the Iron Gates, due east, where it enters Madrid. The Reds, using no fewer than six brigades of international militia, fought desperately to resist, and with counter-attacks which day after day ranged over the same ground, managed to hold out for nearly six weeks. It was becoming apparent that the Red High Command—about this time General Miaja, talkative and boastful yet able, had come to the fore with his two Russian advisers, Generals Goris and Koltzov, and his chief of staff, well-named Colonel Rojo—had taken the discipline and training of this militia well in hand. The improvement in the military qualities of the Reds could be seen week after week.

The first attack had to be the reduction of Humera. This was a small village in the Casa de Campo, about three miles south of Aravaca and the main road. From my observation post in the Casa de Campo, I could not see the village itself, but only the sanatorium, a cluster of small red-brick buildings in a little grove of trees. The Red lines ran about half-way between where I was and the observatory, and it was possible, with the naked eye, to see the Red militia moving about, cooking their dinner in the shade of the trees, and even with glasses to see from time to time the arrival of a Red staff car on the road from Pozuelo. Sometimes nobody exchanged a shot for days, and sometimes bullets were whistling by every other minute. When the offensive began, everything was changed. It started on a small scale which, militarily speaking, was wrong. Two columns of Legionaries and Moors, without much backing in artillery and tanks, captured Humera sanatorium and, moving forward cautiously over very difficult country consisting of a series of entrenched slopes and groves of dark scrub oak and

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fields of silvery olive trees, reached and captured the village of Humera and farther on even the villas round the railway station of Pozuelo. The heads of the columns had been deflected from Aravaca, straight ahead of them, by the force of that position, the approaches to which were beaten by the Reds from three different directions. This side-slipping was a fatal error, as it left the whole Nationalist line once more much in the air. It was so evident that orders were speedily given for the advance guards to fall back along the railway line, abandoning the villas of Pozuelo—the village itself was some distance farther west—and to concentrate in a semicircle north and west of Humera.

The move was carried out at night and just in time. Strong Red forces moving from Boadilla del Monte, still a Red concentration point, and others coming from Madrid itself, were planning an attack for dawn. It started with great fury, led on the west, that is to say round Pozuelo station, by no fewer than sixteen Russian tanks. There was a considerable artillery preparation, but it was obvious that the foreign officers commanding the units of the International Brigade taking part were worried when they found they had "re-taken" Pozuelo station after the exchange of only a few rifle shots. There was some delay, and then the attack pushed on due east to the hollow ground immediately in front of Humera village. It was then about seven in the morning, and the Red attack from Madrid on the right flank of the Nationalists was developing slowly. It was obvious that this was either a diversion or a weak attack, and Colonel Yague, in command, turned all his attention to meet the much more formidable menace rolling up from Boadilla through the ploughed fields and fruit gardens of Pozuelo.

The sixteen huge tanks lurched forward slowly, each followed by its small packet of Red infantry. A second and a third line of infantry, deployed in line and strongly armed with machine-guns and automatic rifles, followed.

The Reds reached the lowest point of the grassy depression—planted in irregular lines with gnarled and twisted olive trees, the youngest certainly a hundred years old, while the veterans may have been there when a French Philippe came to rule over Spain—without much difficulty, and then started to climb to where they knew the Nationalist lines of resistance must be on the heights. The whole thing so far had been so uncannily quiet, so absurdly easy that the Reds must have been getting more and more uncomfortable. They had only lost one tank so far, one hit by what must have been a chance shell while skirting a Red trench in Pozuelo. While the tanks were climbing, however, the Red infantry units were moving forward much more slowly. There was welcome shelter behind the great twisted roots of the olive trees, and imperceptibly the bullets from machine-guns they could not see were playing around them, kicking up the dust at one moment and clipping leaves from the olive trees overhead at another. The fire became more and more intense, and the Red attacking line dwindled as men dropped in the shallow ditches dug round so many of the trees and began to open fire on the hostile crest, dully outlined against the grey southern sky in front of them.

I had a complete story of the attack from a Nationalist artillery observation officer who was in the trenches with a periscope in front of him and a telephone attachment jammed to his ear. "I could see in the dim light about a thousand yards away the ugly forms of the tanks moving between the trees," he told me. "They were coming

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slowly forward but were bad targets because the light was so poor. Anyhow, my orders were to wait for the infantry and to leave the tanks to their special foes, the anti-tank squads and the anti-tank guns. I watched closely for the first wave of Red infantry which should have been behind the tanks, but could see nothing. The tanks came forward until only about two hundred yards distant, when their quick-firing field-guns and their machine-guns burst into action. The first were particularly unpleasant as, fired with high muzzle velocity, they exploded almost before one could hear the whizz of their arrival, and they followed one another with lightning rapidity. Strangely enough, most of the Red tank machine-guns were firing too high, and it appeared that they were misled by the mist and had taken the crest to be fully one hundred yards farther distant than it was.

"At least a minute passed, with nothing happening except that the camouflaged lines of the enemy tanks were growing rapidly in size and detail, and I felt that in a moment they would be all over us. Then the fire of our two anti-tank guns began, while on both flanks I could see flashes of flame followed by dense clouds of smoke showing where our petrol canister throwers were at work. The machine-gun fire had by that time become a shrill though staccato uproar, and both my batteries were firing as fast as they could into the invisible hollow beneath me. Suddenly a roar of flames went up from two tanks in the centre. They had been hit by shells and set on fire. The other grey, brown, and red monsters slithered forward a few yards and then with a crash of gears began to turn. They had first appeared about fifteen in number; two were burning on the crest some fifty yards from us, two others were moving hesitatingly backwards and forwards,

somewhat like gigantic stag beetles which have been turned on their backs, and were obviously in distress. Eleven of them turned completely round and were crashing downhill at full speed through the brushwood, sometimes raised on one ungainly caterpillar as they climbed over an obstacle, sometimes sliding sideways as the treads ceased to catch on the turf and the whole monster appeared for a second to be out of control. Small shells were bursting all round them, sending up little fountains of turf and leaves while the rattle of bullets on their steel "carapace" was as insistent as the sound of rain on a motor-car wind-screen. There were sparks and flashes now and then as the bullets were deflected—crumpled little missiles of metal, infinitely dangerous then for any human flesh they met, as they caterwauled their incalculable course through the air.

"Where was the Red infantry?" My two battery commanders asked me what I had seen, and I told them that the tanks were gone, but that I had not caught sight of a single Red militiaman. Others, however, did. As soon as the Red tanks had disappeared, the Nationalist tanks came out of the little wood in which they had taken cover. Useless for them, slight and delicate things, to be about, when large unwieldy masses of steel, carrying guns which threw shells, were in sight. The sign of the flight of the mastodons was that for the arrival of the whippets. Their machine-guns already chattering, uneasily, they rushed at full speed to the edge of the crest, and there, sheltering half hidden behind trees and brushwood, they began to pour the weight of their fire down into the hollow. There were eight tanks, which meant sixteen machine-guns, a number quickly increased as a machine-gun company rushed forward at the double. Its crews,

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sweating and swearing, were down on their faces in a minute and the work began. Machine-guns were in shell holes or ditches, tripods were fixed, guns screwed into place, sights swung into position with nervous hands; chargers bit their way into their grooves, and as the gunners' fingers took the pressure of the triggers the whole line sprang into a whirlwind of bullets screaming their way down into the confused ranks of the Reds.

"What had happened was that the second and third enemy lines had reached the safety of the dead ground, safety from bullets if not from shells, while the officers of the first line, furious to find their men had not followed the tank wave, were endeavouring to re-form them. At that moment the tanks began crashing back down the hill, and immediately afterwards there came the pitiless hail of machine-gun bullets fired at a maximum of eight to nine hundred yards. It was more than flesh and blood could stand. The tanks, not to be halted in their course by any objurgation, began to climb the reverse slope. They were on their way home and were not waiting for anybody. The Red infantry started to follow, many units in disorder, others obeying the orders of their officers, who saw no use in remaining in the hollow, unprotected, to be massacred. The first units bunched up and ran away as a mob and suffered terrible losses. The second, deployed according to the orders given them, as if they were attacking and not retreating, and so lost naturally many fewer."

When the fight was over, and at nightfall when the enemy sharpshooters had been silenced, it was possible to make a search of the grassy slopes in front of Humera and towards the Pozuelo road. The bodies of the Reds were found in serried ranks where they had been assembled, and in thin lines where they had climbed the hill in full flight,

but followed yard by yard by thirty-two fast machine-guns traversing every avenue of retreat. It was a costly lesson for the Reds, but it had not brought the Nationalists any nearer their ultimate objectives.

These Red counter-attacks, some delivered in Russian style at dead of night, continued for weeks, but without the situation changing very much one way or the other. The Nationalist High Command then determined to make an attack on Boadilla del Monte itself. This took place in the second week of December, and for what was a limited and local engagement it was conducted with great strength. Five columns of Legionaries and Regulares took part in the action. The attack was made on three sides after diligent artillery preparation. It took, however, five days' continuous fighting before the Reds were driven out of the large village of Boadilla del Monte and forced to retire on Pozuelo and Majadahonda. I visited the scene of the battle twenty-four hours afterwards. I found that four, and in some cases seven lines of trenches, properly traversed and wired, seamed the hills surrounding the village. The slaughter was very great. All the Nationalist dead by then had been removed and buried, but the Reds were lying in great numbers all over the place. In many cases they had held their ground despite shelling and machine-gunning, and the trenches were only captured after hand-to-hand fighting, in which hand grenades and the bayonet had been used. There was no mistaking the nature of the wounds and the position of the bodies. Hand-to-hand fighting entails losses on either side, and it was certain that the Nationalist attacking columns must have paid a heavy price for the capture of such well-organised positions.

Once more I noticed that the Reds had used great



quantities of dynamite grenades. These are clumsy affairs which need ignition, have only a very small local effect, and are often far more dangerous to those using them than to their prospective mark. By this time the Reds were receiving thousands of tons of munitions from France, Russia, and Mexico, and it was therefore evident that if the Reds went on using dynamite bombs it was because they liked them. Probably in the word "dynamite" there is some mysterious virtue which charms a Revolutionary's ear.

Boadilla is one of the strongest-built villages I have seen in the Madrid neighbourhood. It has immense farm-buildings, with eight-foot-thick walls like forts, a huge church with similar walls, and a great ducal palace of solid grey stone, which would resist a bombardment with eight-inch howitzers. The palace was frankly hideous, both inside and out, and had been used as hospital, barracks, and powder magazine by the Reds. When I went over it, Nationalist artillery officers were sorting the cases of grenades, bombs, and explosives, deciding what could be kept and what had to be destroyed. The better part of the ground floor of the palace, where were situated the immense vaulted kitchens, had been turned into the powder magazine; nevertheless one of the kitchen fires was crackling, half with coal and half with wood, and an immense dixie of stew was being cooked for the wounded in the hospital beds upstairs. I saw the sparks fly as a clumsy automatic bellows was used to make the fire draw. I looked at the huge pile of black cases, not more than twelve feet away, and wondered what would become of the palace of the Dukes of Sueca were they all to explode.

The neglected gardens of the palace were laid out in terraces with low walls and boxwood borders of formal

design. The Reds had dug trenches behind the walls and the boxwood, and had made their last stand there. Three hundred of them, brave fellows who had scorned to run, were there, still and bloodstained, lying in those stiff and awkward attitudes which tell of sudden death. The eyes were nearly always calm and sometimes slightly surprised. Every man hopes to live, until Death is actually at his shoulder.

Here again one could see that the Red international brigades had been the main element of the defence. The dead I examined were French, Czechs, and Russians. The cartridges for their rifles and machine-guns were French or Mexican, the shell-cases I picked up had been manufactured in Russia.

The Nationalist advance was followed by the usual reaction. Three days later the Reds carried out a series of fierce counter-attacks. On one occasion the left flank of their attack actually reached the Brunete road, and the Red wireless triumphantly announced the capture of that village. It was not true, but it was probably thought to be encouraging to the Reds fighting on other fronts.

The capture of Boadilla was only the prelude to wider planned operations. The Nationalists wished to free the Casa de Campo from Reds and so relieve the troops in that sector and in the University City from the terrible strain of knowing every hour that the Reds were in the rear of them, and that at any moment a successful attack on them might sever their thin lines of communication. No soldier likes having to fight continually looking round behind him.

The next chapter in the plan of campaign was an attack on the left wing directly in front of Brunete towards Las Rozas, at the point of junction of the Escorial and

Corunna roads. From the hills in front of Brunete I could see on the horizon the line of trees where the Corunna road runs, and just twenty yards from the fork the pink and white building of the Bar Anita, a fashionable Madrilenese road-house where, in more peaceful days, I had often driven in the evening with friends. The country rolled in generous curves towards this crest on which ran the great highway to the Atlantic coast at Corunna, the road Sir John Moore took over a century ago. Along the road were clusters of villas. Beyond, after another dip, the scenery rose in terraces. There on the left was the Escorial, nestling in an angle of the mountains, straight ahead and misty, in the distance was Colmenar Viejo, important as a Red centre and as controlling the only road from the Escorial once the Nationalists reached Las Rozas. Beyond, majestic, mantled in snow, rose the peaks of the Guadarrama, ranging from seven thousand to nine thousand feet.

In the immediate foreground there were ploughed fields and the inevitable olive groves. The road led straight ahead and dipped out of sight to Villanueva de la Cañada, slightly on the left but in a hollow, so that only the tip of its church spire could be seen, peeping out of a fold in the ground. That was the first objective, and it was carried within a few hours. The attack, having secured its left flank by holding the two Villanuevas—for that of Pardillo still farther north was taken during the afternoon—it became necessary to change direction and to attack almost due east from this new line. The country is divided by three small streams, but there are no villages until one reaches, first Majadahonda in the fields, and then Las Rozas on the road. Here and there, however, are strange square buildings called *castellos*. They have thick

walls, to withstand the heat of the summer sun, and were used by Madrilenes for week-ends before the more modern form of villa became fashionable. Each of them, usually surrounded by its own olive grove and orchard, could be converted by the Reds into a veritable block-house. The Reds had not omitted to do so. It took thus two days to storm these five thousand yards of undulating fields and to capture the four *castellos* which crowned the slopes. The Reds had no time to counter-attack, but fell back sullenly each day, after having fought desperately. Each *castello* and its gardens had sheltered a battalion of the International Brigade, and each of these battalions had to be wiped out practically to a man before it fell.

It was six days after the opening of the offensive that I was able to reach Majadahonda by car, and then on foot progress as far as las Rozas. It was an awkward and delicate trip. We started out from Boadilla del Monte with a staff car preceding us. I was warned not to follow too closely and not to stop if there was any shelling, but to dash straight on. I had not counted on the fact, however, that we were not taking a road but merely a series of country cart-tracks, and that the staff car was driven with a total disrespect for tyres and springs which was comprehensible when dealing merely with Army property, or say a requisitioned car. Juan, my driver, did not share this feeling, as he knew that he or his brother would have to buy the new tyres and springs, and they would not be furnished by a generous Army Ordnance Department. The result was that we swung and bumped along the rough track, sometimes on a high slope, sometimes almost axle deep in water, at a much slower pace, and within a few minutes had completely lost sight of our guide. There were tracks crossing the one we were taking every

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few hundred yards, and though at first we found boards with arrows and the name Majadahonda, soon there were no indications. On either side of the track, and once or twice right in the middle, were shell holes. Trench lines, crooked and deep-dug, seamed the slopes, and there were bodies everywhere. We managed to steer a straight course more by good luck than anything else, and after a few final bumps we swayed down a bank on to the road, and there was Majadahonda village five hundred yards in front of us. We passed the control post, where we were informed that the staff car had arrived a quarter of an hour earlier and was waiting for us in front of the *ayuntamiento* or town hall.

Majadahonda had not been much damaged in the fighting. It was an ugly, straggling village with the usual irregular market squares, now filled with camp kitchens, and there in the shade a heavy artillery column ready to pull out, its work accomplished. We were told that if we liked we could take our cars as far as Las Rozas, but the staff would prefer us to go on foot as they were obliged to send lorries up with stores and did not want too much attention called to the road, which was in full view of the enemy at Torreldones.

It was only a couple of thousand yards by a field track, and we were soon on the main road. It seemed strange to set foot on its broad asphalt surface, practically undamaged by the war. To see the great signpost pointing to the Escorial, 49 kilometres away, it looked quite easy to go there, but we knew that not more than a kilometre away the road was barricaded, and that Reds were in their trenches ready to fight. The Corunna road brought memories. Away there on the crest of the mountains, in the Guadarrama pass, high in the snow, were the front

lines of the Nationalists, their concrete shelters, and machine-gun posts, which I had visited but a few weeks earlier

It was with difficulty that I recognised the Bar Anita when I reached it. There had been little damage by shot or shell; the plate-glass windows of its great frontage on the main motor road had not been smashed. But within, the wreckage was indescribable. The Bar had, as I knew, held a stock of prize French wines, champagnes and liqueurs. The cellars had been looted until there was nothing left but the bare frames of the iron bins. For a hundred yards in every direction one could see the broken fragments of champagne bottles of every known mark. Everything was filthy; so much so, that without orders, the Moorish Regulares, who had taken over the sector, had begun to sweep and to clean in preparation for their officers, who were due to arrive shortly. It was not yet possible to go along the road, however, for though the enemy had been driven down into the hollows on its north side they could snipe from the gradual rise about a thousand yards away, and they still held Aravaca and Pozuelo on the Madrid end.

The village of Las Rozas itself is in a tiny depression in the fork of the road going to the Escorial. It has a very pretty church, much dilapidated by the Reds, who had used it as a powder magazine and a dance hall, apparently, alternately. Its last houses were barricaded, and a brisk fire was being kept up on the Red trenches, only distant about three hundred yards outside the village. The whole of this area as far as Brunete has been the scene of the latest Red drive. The offensive, originally planned to relieve the pressure on Bilbao, was a formidable affair backed by some 50,000 of the best Red troops; but it

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broke down because the Nationalists held the strong point of Boadilla and Majadahonda.

On my way back to Talavera I picked up a Spanish staff officer who told me an interesting tale illustrating the fact that the division of families during the Civil War has often given rise to tragic situations. He described how, but a few days back, negotiations of a semi-official character took place between the Reds and local Nationalist commanders for the exchange of three Red families living in Nationalist Spain in return for three Nationalist families living in Red Spain. The process was to be quite simple. A four-mile stretch of road near the village of Miajadas, east of Merida and then in Red territory, was to be neutralised, and at a given hour lorries carrying the families from either side were to be taken to the middle of the strip for the exchange. The lorries were to be driven in reverse to this appointed meeting-place from the moment they reached the neutralised strip of road. Thus they would be able to drive off again with the minimum delay.

"Where the difficulty came," my informant told me, "was when Captain Luna, who acted as negotiator for the Nationalists, informed the Red families of what had been settled. He first visited two families and told them they were to be transferred to the territory south of the Tagus where they would find other members of their families and their male relatives, who were fighting in the ranks of the Reds. This proposal, however, met with shouts and cries of disapproval. Indignantly both families, men, women, and children, refused to budge. The women, lying on the ground, said: 'You will have to drag us by main force, for we will not get up and move an inch, we are safe and happy here, and here we intend to remain.'

"Captain Luna gave up the struggle, but put on a lorry

the third family composed of fourteen persons without informing them of their destination. When the lorry, however, reached the vicinity of Miajadas the patriarch of this family, a man aged about eighty-five, realised what was being done and, as the car stopped before turning so as to proceed up the neutral strip in reverse, he got down and bade his womenfolk to follow. They then all refused to move.

"In despair Captain Luna drove in his car to the appointed meeting-place and there met the Red captain who had been arranging the exchanges on the other side. He was particularly interested in the negotiations as he was the son of the white-haired old man who was waiting obstinately on the road two miles away. After having explained the situation, Captain Luna said: 'Come with me yourself and try to persuade your father to accompany you, as we are anxious to conclude our side of the bargain as far as possible.' The Red officer, refusing the permission to take two armed men with him as an escort, got into Captain Luna's car, and a pathetic scene ensued when he met the members of his family. They still refused to move, and the aged father said, 'You have gone your way, and you think you are right; otherwise I would stand here and curse you for bringing ruin on your country and shame on my white head. Begone, and remember that none of us would ever dream of following you to your camp of iniquity.' The Red captain bowed his head and, getting back into Captain Luna's car, he said to him, 'You can bring your lorry with you. I will hand over your people to you, for you have done your best like a good fellow, and it is our fault, not yours, that our reputation is such that honest people refuse to entrust themselves to us.'"



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About this time, during a visit to Avila, I met an interesting Italian. He was Signor Guido Caprotti da Monza, the portrait painter. A tall, middle-aged man, with an expressive and humorous face, he was exceedingly good company and had a fund of anecdotes about the art circles of Montparnasse and well-known figures in the world of art and the stage. He had an immense atelier in Madrid, where he not only painted, but also held a sort of school of art like the painters of olden times. In Avila he lived in a mediaeval palace which he had modernised without spoiling its artistic *cachet*. He kept practically open house, and we knew that when we tired of the Spanish cooking we had only to drop round to his house at the *aperitive* hour to be welcomed and promptly invited to stay for dinner. Caprotti was very fond of good food and good wine, and told us that he often put his hand to the cooking himself and was inordinately proud of a book of cooking which he had published in French and Italian some years back, with thirty original recipes.

"I came to Avila," he told me, "quite by accident eighteen years ago. There was a very heavy fall of snow in the Guadarrama, and the railway line was blocked by an immense drift at Robledo de Chavela, where Captain Aguilera is taking us to-morrow. I had to spend the night in Avila and so put up at the Hotel Ingles. The next day I decided to have a good look round Avila and I found I liked it. For three years I did not leave the place except when I had an urgent appointment in Madrid which I could not avoid. I made at least half my sitters come to my studio here and be painted, telling them it would do them good. And then I bought this place as a permanent summer home, and now how

glad I am, because it would have been unpleasant for me, an Italian, to have been obliged to remain in Madrid."

About the same time I met the Duke of Montellano, who had just managed to escape from Bilbao and had joined the staff of Lieutenant-Colonel Castejon of Spanish Legion fame. What he told me was of special interest to myself, as he said "I hid in Bilbao in the house of an Englishman, whose name I cannot give for the moment, as his property might suffer if the Reds knew what he had done. My host and benefactor received the *Daily Mail*, and it was by reading your dispatches that I knew what was the real state of affairs, and was able to keep up, not only my own courage, but also that of the numerous other Spaniards of Nationalist views who were also in hiding and to whom I was able to circulate the good news that all was not lost."

There was a lull in the fighting about Christmas time, and most of us war correspondents felt bored and tired. We did get together, however, for a dinner on New Year's Eve, to which we invited a number of prominent Spaniards and for which the menu, simple but good, was entirely prepared by ourselves. The dinner began at ten o'clock, and we were still at table at two in the morning. Toasts of all sorts were drunk at midnight, and in fact somebody got up and put the hands of the clock back as there were still more toasts to be drunk and they showed five minutes past twelve. So we had three different midnights for three different sets of healths to be drunk. All very foolish, but a welcome diversion all the same.

I had the pleasure of making the Frenchmen who were present all stand and drink to the health of the next King of France. We English drank to the health of our own King, followed by a silent toast to the Duke of Windsor.

## THE ATTACKS ON THE CORUNNA ROAD

The next important fighting began on January 8, when General Orgaz, who now commanded the "Reinforced Madrid Division," which really amounted to something like an Army corps, pushed his line right forward to the slopes of Partridge Hill, thus completing the capture of the Corunna road and finally clearing the Casa de Campo of Reds. This was of immense importance, as it gave the Nationalists a broad base for communications with the University City, and abolished the terrible danger that one day the Nationalist garrison on the left bank of the Manzanares might find itself cut off by a successful Red counter-attack in the Casa de Campo. But it did not go quite as far as many of us had hoped. We had expected that once Partridge Hill had been seized, the Nationalists would continue their drive due north and hold the Pardo Park as far north as Colmenar and east as Alcobendas. This would have effectively cut off all the Red garrisons at the Escorial and in the Guadarrama. We were merely map strategists and knew little of the difficulties of the ground, the number of Red fortified positions which would have to be taken, and also whether General Orgaz had sufficient troops. For what appeared throughout this "siege" of Madrid to be holding the Nationalists back most was the shortage of trained men. The Legionaries and the Moors were the only shock troops, and they had never numbered more than about fifteen thousand men. Their ranks had been decimated time after time, but had always been filled up with recruits hurriedly trained, but who—marvel of *esprit de corps*—always seemed as good as their predecessors. These shock troops were used in every offensive, but they could only cover a limited front, and therefore those further strategic gains which time after time would have been so valuable had to

be forgone for lack of troops to exploit them. Not only was this true, but also once a local success had been gained it was not possible to attack again speedily at the same or at a different point; there was no possibility of that continued rain of blows described by Foch as the most effective of all modern war methods. The tired troops had to be rested, and it was not until they had been rested and their ranks replenished that it was possible for a fresh attack to be staged. This invariably gave the defeated enemy time to recover, time to entrench himself, time to bring up his reserves, and finally time to counter-attack.

General Franco was well aware of the deficiencies of his army, and all these months he was working hard, forging new weapons in the shape of new regiments of the regular army, carefully trained in the rear and then accustomed to war conditions gradually by stages in the front line, and also fresh *banderas* of the famous Legion, drawn in a number of cases from an orderly influx of several thousands of foreign volunteers, mainly Italian.

It was the Legionaries, four *banderas* of them, who captured Pozuelo, not only the railway station this time, but the whole village, which had been terribly damaged by Nationalist air attacks. Here again it was patent that the International Brigade had been employed and had worked hard, for there were line after line of deep-dug trenches, with concrete dug-outs and well-devised pill-boxes for machine-guns. The Legionaries in four hours, however, had swept through the heart of the Red positions, and the Moors, advancing from Humera to Aravaca, completed the day's victory by holding the whole of the Corunna road to the point where it dips and crosses the Manzanares to enter Madrid by the Iron Gate.

The Nationalists' losses were again severe. The Red

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troops who held the positions both at Pozuelo and at Aravaca were not men to allow themselves to be driven away easily and without putting up a stiff fight. Some of the units at Pozuelo were entirely French, with French sergeants and French officers, and they fought desperately. When I visited the battlefield three days later I found them lying dead in rows in the trenches from which not one man had fled. Hand-to-hand fighting with grenades and bayonets had again been necessary, and in such warfare the attacker cannot but suffer heavily himself.

The Red High Command must have been very seriously alarmed at this latest Nationalist success, for they made a series of counter-attacks lasting continuously for something like forty-eight hours. One of the fiercest was conducted by three columns of Russians and was a night attack. The Reds formed up near Zarzuelo in the Pardo Park and, without any artillery preparation, started out at two in the morning on a pitch-black night to endeavour to drive through by sheer weight of numbers in close formation to Humera in the centre of the Casa de Campo. It was found later that the orders were that there was to be no deployment, no matter what were the losses, until Humera had been reached, when a line would be established with two protective flanks thrown back to Aravaca, and where the Reds were to await daylight before continuing their advance. It sounds a desperate plan, but the amazing thing was that it was touch and go that it did not succeed.

The three columns, each composed of some two thousand men, advanced with an interval of three hundred yards between the advance guards, and so that this distance be kept throughout the night attack the left files of each column were every five minutes to fire lights of

different colours so that there could be no doubt as to the direction.

The tanks first brought down the Nationalist barrage of artillery, but this was not strong enough to prevent both tanks and infantry storming through with little loss. Then when the Nationalist picket line opened fire the machine-gun posts came into play and the Red columns began to suffer severe losses. The machine-gunners were firing blindly, but they were firing in accordance with a "range table," and so the ground across which the three dense columns of Russian Reds were advancing was swept every minute by a spray of bullets which each time took its toll. The three columns came nearer; distance had not been preserved. Despite the rockets and the lights, and despite the Lucas lamp signals, the natural result of night marching had become manifest. The columns were diverging the one from the other, and the centre column had swung round almost at right angles for a moment and was marching straight towards the Manzanares. It must have been, according to reports which I read many days afterwards, when they had gone nearly three thousand yards that an officer caught a momentary glimpse of the stars through the clouds and then corrected the direction of this column. The left-flank column had also of necessity modified its line of march, though only when the sergeants of the centre column were almost on them and, pushing and swearing, ordering them to keep their distance of three hundred yards.

It was this left column which first ran into serious difficulties. It had been deflected so far to the east that its head ran up against the Nationalist lines at Aravaca. The officer in charge, at that very moment, discovered the error of march, and was giving orders to correct it so

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as to bring his men back into alignment with the centre and move southwards towards Humera.

The Nationalist lines began to blaze with flame as every machine-gun opened fire, while Very light after Very light went up. The Reds should have deployed and withdrawn. It was their only hope, but nobody gave orders, and still in column of march they swung off across the fields to rally the centre. Men stumbled in the ruts of the stubble fields, men fell hit by bullets, men lay down to get out of the terrible fire which was raking the line of march. It is estimated that this column alone lost more than half its effectives in this marching and counter-marching before any real fighting took place.

Finally with the alarm rockets going up from all over the Nationalist lines, the heads of the three columns more or less in position made their desperate dash for the centre of the Nationalist trenches at Humera. Colonel Yague's men had identified the line of progress of the tanks, and at three in the morning scouts came in and reported the march of the three columns. The Nationalist officer in charge of the front line immediately withdrew his machine-guns to a flank and slightly to the rear, and prepared to counter-attack with hand grenades the moment the Reds set foot in his trenches.

Still being cut into by machine-gun bullets, the columns rushed forward, buglers who had been brought out for this night attack actually sounding the charge. The heads of the left and centre column were completely shot away, not a single man of the leading companies reaching the Nationalists' front line owing to the terrible fire from the machine-gun on the flank. The right column, which all through had been less tried, was moving up a small depression and did not get the full force of the fire. It

reached the Nationalist trenches, cut right through, and stormed on towards the second line where, according to orders, the men started to deploy.

I had the rest of the story from a Legion officer of Lieutenant-Colonel Castejon's staff who came down with a slight wound after the battle "We had moved up two support companies from the rear," he told me, "and we were just approaching our line when in the dark we could see a large body of men coming towards us at the double and opening out. We dashed straight at them. I used my revolver, but there was little or no firing as we were at too close a range and, therefore, bayonet or rifle butt was used. Some Moors who came up, I don't know where from, dropped their rifles and used their daggers. It was a pretty shambles while it lasted. I found myself using my pistol as a club, and then suddenly everything seemed to clear up; the Reds were running. We went after them at the double, but no farther than our front line trenches, because our machine-gun officers, who were working like Trojans, wanted to get their barrages at work again on the retreating enemy."

I went over the field of battle two days later and traced the advance of the three columns by the regular lines of dead. Between the Nationalists' first and second lines the Red dead were in heaps, ten or twelve at the same point, and then another dozen, and so on for over one hundred and fifty yards. The Reds must have lost something like 1,500 dead in that one night attack alone.

It was a bright, sunny day when I went up to visit Pozuelo and Aravaca, and the Reds were still excessively active. They had ceased their counter-attacks but were keeping up incessant shelling and machine-gun barrages. They had made a strong-point at a large villa, whose



name in letters of gold, Atlaya, could still be seen, though riddled with bullets, hanging askew on the great iron gateway. Their trenches ran right into the villa garden, and the communicator going back down the hill to Pozuelo was cut right through the living-rooms of the villa. Next to the garden gate was a Russian tank. It had evidently been caught in an awkward spot where it had little room to turn, and it was being backed along the garden wall when it met its fate.

The Nationalist artillery had wrought havoc with the Villa Atlaya, and with half its roof off and huge shell holes through walls, one had to step cautiously when one entered for fear of bringing down crazy beams and masonry on one's head. Dishes and dixies of food stood in one corner, showing how the Reds had used the place till the last minute. On the billiard-table a couple of cues were lying, and the score was written in chalk on a slate, but the balls had disappeared. There was some very fine furniture, most of it irreparably damaged. In one room, however, I saw a magnificent Venetian mirror without a single crack. It was a large affair and must have been worth at least three hundred guineas. By now most likely more of the roof has fallen in, and the chances of the owners finding the mirror intact when they come back to their house are very small.

The village of Pozuelo itself was more destroyed than any other place I have visited during the Civil War. Enormous craters showed where Nationalist air bombs had hit, and even the thick-walled, stoutly built Spanish houses had collapsed. In the church, showing an immense hole through the roof of the apse, there was an amazing collection of furniture. Part of the nave had been used as a dancing room, and apparently cabaret turns were also

given, as one could guess from a programme chalked in lewd Spanish on the wall. The confessional boxes had been turned into dressing-room accommodation with anti-conception devices for the women, and generally speaking the Reds, with their usual sadism, had endeavoured to do everything foul which they thought might desecrate the church more.

In one corner was a magnificent Portuguese tester bed with twisted columns, and, standing next to it, a grandfather clock in a beautiful painted box. The woodwork and painting were Spanish, but the clock itself was by one John Davis of London. I would have liked to take it with me as it seemed doubtful that its owner, if alive, would ever find it again. But I did not care to appear to be a looter, and the clock was not an object which could be easily transported.

Past the railway station, the scene of so much unsuccessful fighting weeks earlier, we had to leave our cars when we got to the entrance of Aravaca. Four-inch and six-inch shells were falling on either side of the road pretty frequently, and it would have been unwise to go any farther by car. Aravaca we found in a very good state of repair, and after visiting the Sector Commander we were authorised at our own risks and perils to go up the main street, cross the waste ground looking somewhat like a village green, and on to Partridge Hill to find once more our familiar Corunna road. There was the Halcyon road house on Partridge Hill, a famous meeting-place for the Red leaders of Madrid, and I was very anxious to have a good look at it.

But I was to find that Aravaca was not a healthy place for a stroll. We went across the "village green" while a perfect chatter of machine-gun bullets went on overhead.

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I asked what was the distance of the Red machine-gun posts, and when told fifteen hundred yards I tried to work out trajectories and came to the conclusion that the bullets would be very effective and would also have the additional disadvantage of not hitting one horizontally but vertically, thus making a much more unpleasant wound. It would have been *infra dig.* to hurry, especially as the Legion officer accompanying us, a pleasant young fellow, did not seem to care anything about it and even stopped at one most unpleasant spot to ask for a light. When finally we reached the comparative shelter of the line of villas and their gardens abutting on the main road, I could see the bullets chipping the mortar and bricks and kicking up little spurts of dust on the road.

Straight in front of us were two Russian tanks, put out of action by direct hits from anti-tank guns, and farther along the road another. The Reds apparently did not like anybody approaching these, for they were the object of a special barrage from machine-guns, and even the Legion officer did not suggest that we should pay them a visit.

I did want to get to the road-house, however, and we slipped through the gardens at the back, engineers having thoughtfully cut passages through the walls, until we were about three hundred yards from the crest of the road where we could see it standing with its pergolas, its imitation marble pillars and its ice-cake decorations. My friend d'Hospital and myself looked at the road and listened to the hum of the bullets and decided that it was not worth the risk. Three of our companions, braver possibly, or perhaps less versed in the dangers of machine-gun fire, said they would run for it. They did, and had not gone fifty yards before they were lying flat in a wet

ditch. It took them half an hour to turn round and wriggle back, and the moment one of them raised his head a few inches or so it was to hear the crackle of the machine-gun bullets and to see earth being raised at a dozen different points.

We two meanwhile had entered the first villa we saw to find an artillery mess installed. We were offered luncheon, which we refused, but it was good to sit round a big log fire, and the coffee which was served was very agreeable. We were shown bullet holes through the shutters in every direction, and told that only that morning two officers sitting at breakfast had been wounded. Some sandbags had since been put up outside the window.

"Would you like some French brandy?" the battery major asked us, and we readily accepted. "It comes from the Halcyon road-house," he went on, and we realised that others had been able to get there. But the major added that it was only at night that anybody could go there along the road, though it was possible to make a detour by a trench in the fields.

Half an hour later I met an old man who told me that he was waiting for dusk to take the road back to his house on Partridge Hill. "I have been very well treated," he said; "my wife and I have our little cottage there, next to the road-house, where I used to be second chef. We did not want to leave. We cooked the dinners for the Reds as long as they were there." And he shrugged his shoulders, adding. "They did not pay well, but we had to live. Now there is nothing left for us to do, but my wife and I are still staying there, and as soon as the fighting moves along we will get busy again with our pots and pans, and you won't find any better cooking in Spain."

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In Aravaca I was shown a terrible little black book which belonged to the chief Red executioner in that region. He had only put his Christian name Garcia in the fly-leaf; all the rest of the pages were filled with lists and descriptions of the people he had shot. It was obvious he was a man with a methodical mind, and preferred whenever possible to have the names of the people he was shooting. For the first entries, among them three women, he had the names of nearly all. Then there came page after page in which there was only a rough description such as. "Shot this morning, September 15. One old man, white hair, slight moustache, wearing grey jacket, blue shirt, black trousers." It was very noticeable that the man had made inquiries, for superimposed on such anonymous details might be scrawled, obviously at a later date, a name: "Pedro Jimenez." But there was the little black book of Aravaca, and there was the terrible tale of Red murders for that tiny village alone. In twenty days fifty-six men and women had been shot in Aravaca. Official information from Madrid was that before the end of 1936 over 50,000 people had been shot in Madrid by the Reds. Of this number there were over 5,000 women and children. The figures registered at the British Embassy at this moment, I was told, numbered well over 25,000, and it was then well known that the British Embassy officials had not been able to register more than about one in two murders carried out by the Reds.

It must be remembered that while the Red courts martial and people's courts were working at top speed they did not manage to condemn more than about thirty per cent of the people who were actually shot. All the rest of the executions were carried out entirely illegally, even accepting Red theories of government. It is remarkable

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that during all these months of war there was no place in Spain where peace, law, and order were maintained save in Nationalist territory. While in Red Spain there were murders, bomb-throwing, arson, and other crimes almost without number, the criminal calendar of ordinary offences in Nationalist Spain fell to practically zero. The reason was that all the professional criminals had already chosen the other side—some of them even to be Ministers of the Valencia Government—and had gone over to their soul-mates, the Communists. And so through Navarre, Galicia and Castile the normal life of the country went on almost without interruption. For perhaps the first time since the Republic had usurped power, it was possible for foreigners to wander freely at night through the streets of Spanish provincial towns without danger of meeting with an unfortunate accident. During the months I have travelled from north to south of Nationalist Spain I have never found any need to lock my valises or to keep my hotel room door closed. The normal Spaniard is honest, and the abnormal Spaniards were all on the side of the Reds. In February and March I had the good fortune to have with me, pleasantest of colleagues and travelling companions, Mr. Randolph S. Churchill. He told me how, returning from Talavera to Avila over the Sierra de Gredos, his car broke down. He was then only forty miles from Avila, so, telling the chauffeur to wait until he sent a breakdown car, he promptly “jumped” a lorry.

“When I arrived at Avila cross-roads,” he said, “I had to get down, as the lorry was going straight on to Salamanca. I offered the man two *douros* [roughly five shillings], but he politely and quite decisively refused to accept it, saying he had been only too glad to render a

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service." That was how I found nearly all Spaniards. They were cautious and reserved, but they did not care anything for money. It hardly existed so far as they were concerned.

In Avila there was a bright and cheerful society, amazingly simple in their ways and manners. There were a number of young girls, but even war-time excitement did not make them, as the French say, "throw their bonnets over the windmills." Half a dozen of the prettiest and brightest were always to be seen together. It was taken for granted that they were looking for husbands, and they were laughingly described as "the chaser squadron."

It has been said that a Spanish woman, after marriage, is relegated to the home and that her only tasks then are going to church, bringing children into the world, and looking after them. It is certain that the Spanish woman does go to church a lot, and has many children, but she certainly does not appear to think that she is "relegated" anywhere. She is bright, she laughs most of the time, usually displaying pretty white teeth, and she appears to take good care that her husband pays her the necessary attention and does not court anybody else too long. The Spaniard is not, perhaps, as polite to women as we or the French are, but he is fully occupied in seeing they have a good time. On the other hand, he equally insists on the family life being kept up, and when a Spaniard and his wife go away somewhere it is always with all the children and two or three nurses and maids. The old romantic idea of Spanish women sitting with fan in hand behind an iron-barred window must be dismissed as belonging to a century long past. The Spanish girls would be the first to laugh at it.

The month of January had come to an end, and, after

a brief visit to the Riviera on important business, I returned to Spain for the further operations round Madrid in the Jarama sector and on the Guadalajara road. Mr. W. F. Hartin, fresh from his experiences in Abyssinia, had come out to Spain to represent the *Daily Mail* in the meantime, and he saw much of the fighting at the beginning of the year. When I returned I was accompanied by Mr Randolph S. Churchill, who was extremely keen on making an early acquaintance with war conditions. Unfortunately, there was in reality little chance at this moment of going far forward on any active front. Diplomatic necessity caused a veil to be drawn over all points where any foreign volunteers, and especially Italians, might be found, and so the General Staff did not willingly countenance journalistic expeditions to the front lines.

We were able, however, to go once or twice to the front lines in the Aravaca district and to Robledo de Chavela. A few bullets whistled overhead from time to time, and when I told Randolph Churchill, he was surprised and not a little disappointed. "I never heard them," he said, and was visibly annoyed to learn that he had been under fire for the first time in his life and had been entirely ignorant of the fact. Later he was able both to see and hear the Russian 4.7-inch shells bursting in sufficient proximity to be quite well aware of the fact.

Randolph Churchill was extremely anxious to ascertain the treatment accorded to ordinary rank-and-file Red prisoners. He repeated a statement of his father's that grass may grow on battlefields but not on scaffolds, and was much gratified when he was able after some persistence to send an important exclusive announcement to



England of the humanitarian policy decided upon by General Franco in this respect.

Despite the fact that he spoke his mind with unusual frankness, Churchill was a great favourite not only with his colleagues of the Press of all nationalities but also with the Spaniards, who much admired the tawny spade beard he began to grow on entering Spain.

While I was absent from Spain Malaga had fallen after a whirlwind offensive which had taken the Reds entirely by surprise. Spanish Legion units composed of Italian volunteers, admirably equipped with the latest mechanised models, each unit having its own tanks, accompanying artillery, air squadrons and ample transport, had taken an effective though not predominant share in the campaign. The advent of these new units to the Foreign Legion undoubtedly scared the Reds and made them more willing to listen to the objurgations of General Miaja, the only real soldier they had. He insisted that the International Brigade be drawn from the line whenever possible and sent back, not to Madrid, where discipline was ineffective, but to places like Tarancon, Sacedon and Chinchon, well east of the capital, for training and reorganisation. It was then that he began to mould the new Red army, which thought more of fighting than of politics, which no longer elected its officers but merely obeyed them, and which by February was beginning to be quite a fair fighting instrument.

The first time the remodelled Red militia came into effective battle was on the Jarama river. General Varela planned this action as an attack first due east and then north-east, once the Jarama river had been crossed. He was given ample troops, Legion and Moorish units, and also for the first time a considerable force of artillery.

As he had to cross a river in the face of a strongly entrenched enemy it was obviously necessary to have plenty of guns to prepare the passage.

The front of attack was from Villaverde, the Cerro de los Angeles, by Pinto south to Sesena, and its first objective was Vaciamadrid, a little village just fifteen miles out of the capital on the main Madrid-Valencia road. This broad road had been used almost exclusively for revictualling Madrid. The great proportion of food and munitions brought by rail from Valencia as far as emergency railheads, like Alcazar de San Juan, was then transported by lorry to the army camps and to the capital along this road and the Chinchon side road which joins it close to Vaciamadrid. If these roads were to be cut, it meant that all traffic would have to be diverted to the eastern Cuenca road, making enormous and costly detours, while stores at existing railheads would be useless. There was an even graver danger. This General Miaja had promptly realised and already partly guarded against. It was the danger that a Nationalist offensive, driving north-east and reaching the neighbourhood of Alcala de Henares, might force a great number of the international battalions back into Madrid. There he knew that without supplies, no matter how desperately they might fight, their fate would be sealed in a week or so.

The moment the Nationalist attack began Miaja therefore prudently based the troops defending his left flank—that is to say between Aranjuez and Ciempozuelos—on Chinchon as advanced headquarters and Tarancon as railhead and reserve base. His centre he based on Alcala de Henares and Pastrana, while only those few units defending Vallecas (a suburb of the capital) were cantooned in Madrid.

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The moment the attack was fully developed and it appeared certain that no other offensive was due to take place elsewhere, General Miaja brought up all his remodelled divisions to the Jarama front and before the fighting died down he had something like 40,000 men strung out along the line. General Varela had for his part not more than 15,000 front-line troops. Once again the Nationalists were going into battle somewhat prematurely and without sufficient effectives if they really had ambitious projects. If they only wished to cut the Valencia road and pave the way for future action, then they were justified and they succeeded.

The first and most bitter fighting took place on the right flank along the railway embankment at Ciempozuelos. The Reds there lost ground early, but coming back in the afternoon in a surprise counter-attack fought extremely well and, before they were finally driven off, lost hundreds of dead to the Nationalist machine-gun fire. In the centre, progress through three days of fighting was more rapid. The Nationalists quickly seized Vaciamadrid, effectively cutting the Valencia and Chinchon roads, and, having crossed the Jarama near St. Martin de la Vega, pushed forward to Perales and the immediate outskirts of Arganda.

The crossing of the Jarama was a brilliant bit of work carried out with great dash by two banderas of Spanish Legionaries and by four squadrons of Moorish cavalry. The latter rode their horses across the river, deployed in line despite heavy machine-gun fire, and, taking shelter in a ravine on the other side, dismounted and pushed to the crests. Here they established a line of machine-gun posts which held back enemy counter-attacks until the engineers and the Legionaries had built a pontoon bridge

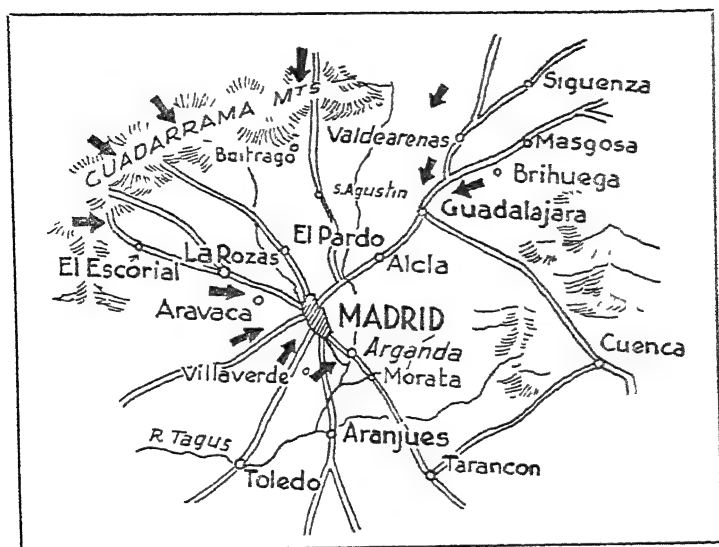
to carry tanks and artillery. The Reds were entirely taken by surprise. They had not dreamt that the passage of the Jarama could be forced so easily and so speedily.

When all this had been done and the primary objectives of the push (the cutting of the Valencia and Chinchon roads) had been accomplished, a change came over the fighting. Miaja had by then brought the majority of his foreign and remodelled units into the line. General Varela's front had become fan-shaped, and was therefore half as long again as when he started the offensive; too drawn out for his depleted forces. To carry on the offensive he would have needed ten fresh battalions, and they were not yet available. Miaja profited from his superiority to launch a series of counter-attacks during the following week, but these were productive of little, as the Nationalists, carefully entrenched and in good positions, were able to hold out without losing more than a few yards of trench. Stalemate continued. All this time, and even as the last shots of the Jarama fights were being fired, there was talk of a great new offensive being planned. It is possible there was too much talk, though it is difficult to see how during a civil war it can ever be possible to conceal completely the plans for a big offensive.

Three sectors were mentioned: the Guadalajara road, the Pardo Park and University City, and the Jarama. Everybody plumped for the Guadalajara sector, saying that the other two points could only be the scenes of small diversions. They were right, for actually the Nationalist command was planning an extremely ambitious attack down the main Aragon road, directed towards Guadalajara. A tentative date fixed for the attack was towards the end of February. The attack,

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to be carried out by a number of entirely motorised columns, was to be pushed forward at the greatest speed so as to prevent General Miaja, who had the advantage of fighting on interior lines, from having the time to bring all his reserves into play. It was hoped that on the third



SKETCH MAP ILLUSTRATING THE ATTACK ON MADRID,  
MARCH 1937

day of the attack one at least of the columns would have reached the Cuenca road, Guadalajara would have fallen, and the Nationalist advance guards would be pushing forward as fast as their scouting tanks could go on the road to Alcalá de Henares. That would have meant the fall of Madrid. Miaja would have been driven back east. Despite the fact that he could be counted on to deliver furious blows in counter-attack, it was estimated that he would be unable to break the encircling ring of

troops and that within a week the red and gold banner would once more be floating over Madrid

How far these prophecies erred on the side of optimism it will be my task now to unravel. Before going into detail all that is necessary is to say that the offensive met with a distinct set-back due to atmospheric conditions and human failure in probably equal parts.

The first thing that went wrong with the offensive was that it was delayed too long and that there was divided leadership. Undoubtedly, the whole attack was supposed to be under the command of General Moscardo, himself under the immediate supervision of the wise and cautious General Mola. Actually, owing to the fact that the strong and well-equipped foreign, mainly Italian, units, newly incorporated in the Spanish Legion, were to take part for the first time in a major offensive, the military councils were divided. This was negligible when things were going well, but was to prove a considerable drawback the moment there was a hitch, and finally necessitated all the authority of the presence of both Generals Franco and Mola on the scene of battle to impose a unified command and to secure implicit obedience to orders. The delay was possibly inevitable. The weather at the end of February was none too good, and this made the preparation of the dumps and all technical work which had to precede the offensive, which at the outset at least went through hilly country, difficult and slow.

Finally, when things were proceeding a little faster, a certain amount of transport and some fresh units had to be diverted north to Oviedo, where the Reds were making a desperate onslaught, obviously with the very object of creating a diversion. Belarmino Tomas, who commanded the offensive against Oviedo for the

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Bilbao Reds, was given the pick of the Red militia there, all the foreign units which had been trained at Bilbao, and all that was left of the notorious corps of Asturian miners and *dinamiteros*. All told he had 35,000 men, and was well equipped, being furnished with fifty Russian tanks, two hundred field-guns, and over a thousand machine-guns. With this force he attacked General Arganda in command at Oviedo. Arganda had but eight thousand Nationalists, mainly second-line troops, with him. But Nationalist second-line troops, though possibly not good in the offensive, are excellent troops in defence, and so Belarmino Tomas found to his cost.

The position at Oviedo is (and has been ever since the city was relieved in October) very peculiar. The Nationalists marched into Oviedo from the west, that is from Galicia. Their road into the city is through a defended passage-way in the hills which is rarely more than eight to ten miles wide. On every other side the mountains are held by the Reds, and so Oviedo is like a little white peninsula jutting far out into a deep Red sea. This was obviously an ideal spot for a surprise attack. The Reds came to within a few hundred yards of the eastern outer suburbs of Oviedo, were there held in check for a week, and then a fortnight later driven back to their starting-posts. During these weeks of fighting Belarmino Tomas lost more than half his effectives, despite the fact that they were the picked troops of the Bilbao Red army, and he was recalled to explain his defeat.

The mechanised units, withdrawn from General Moscardo's forces in the south, were free to move off, and so at last everything was in place for the expected Nationalist offensive. Even then it was hoped that the offensive might begin on the 3rd or 4th of March, but

actually it was not until the 7th that the troops moved out of their assembly positions at dawn and dashed forward. The Nationalist plan was apparent the moment the attack began. The offensive started from the general line Sigüenza-Alcolea del Pinar. It was conducted by three very strong columns, admirably prepared for the tasks which confronted them. The first or right-hand column, composed of Legionaries under Lieutenant-Colonel Castejon, had first to clear the hills south and east of Sigüenza so as to capture Cogolludo and then push down the Soria road and along the small Badiel river and the Madrid-Barcelona railway line. The centre column, mainly composed of the new Italian units recently incorporated in the Legion, was to drive on to the main Aragon road at Algora and then, sweeping everything before them, pour down towards Guadalajara. To the east of the road a third column, acting partly as flank guard and partly as an offensive force, and made up of a mixed brigade, was to secure the upper Tajuna valley at Masegoso and then, driving straight south, capture Brihuega, whence they would push on as far as Armunaz on the Cuenca road, thus isolating any Red troops at Guadalajara and co-operating in the final phase of the offensive with the centre column.

It was prettily planned, and it very nearly succeeded. The first set-back was the weather. Sunday morning was cold and dull, but the roads were dry, no rain having fallen the previous week, when those valuable days from February 28 onwards were being "wasted." The progress on Sunday was, therefore, rapid, and the Reds put up little resistance. Cogolludo, Jadraque and Almadrones fell.

The right and centre columns had therefore done well. On the left the flanking column had seized Masegoso and



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was well on its way to Brihuega. On Sunday night, while the staff were preparing orders for the next morning, a thin drizzle began to fall which on the heights (the lowest point where fighting took place was at 1,800 feet altitude) was changed into snow. Monday morning came, and the drizzle had turned into a blizzard of sleet and snow. Despite this the three columns pushed ahead and still made good progress. But they were falling behind their time schedule. They had twenty-five miles to cover, fighting all the way, within the next forty-eight hours if they were to be astride the Cuenca road before Miaja could bring up his reinforcements.

Lorries and tanks skidded and slid down the mountain gradients, there were traffic jams where some vehicle overturned, and the whole military machine worked slower and slower. Tuesday found the Nationalists only just south of Brihuega on the left, just south of Trihueque in the centre, and just north of Hita on the Badiel river to the right. The storms continued all along the line with unabated violence. Many mountain tracks assigned to troops by the staff could not be used at all; all secondary roads were churned up deep in mud; and at points even the main Aragon road could only take traffic proceeding at a walking pace. The whole advantage of an intensely mechanised force had been lost. Indeed, it is possible that in many details horse-drawn traffic would have been liable to fewer breakdowns. The benefit of surprise conferred by superior mobility had disappeared. Already the heads of General Miaja's counter-attacking Red columns were moving up from Guadalajara and from along the Cuenca road.

On Wednesday a half-hearted attempt to continue the offensive was made and was brought to a standstill by

the terrible weather conditions and because of stiffening resistance from the Reds. Road conditions in the rear of the Nationalist advance guards were terrible, and traffic discipline was very poor. It was the first time that most of these troops had been engaged, and they and their officers were not as wide awake to the changes of fortune in modern war as they might have been.

Then came the series of Red counter-attacks. These attacks were delivered by Miaja's newly reorganised brigades, and though they did do a great deal of damage and did put a stop to the Guadalajara offensive, they did not score a major victory, as in the circumstances they might have. Miaja had planned his riposte well. While with small bodies he counter-attacked the heads of the Nationalist columns, he had managed to mass some 15,000 men in the hills along the upper Tagus, facing the stretch of the Aragon road between Alcolea del Pinar and Navalpotro, thus directly menacing Nationalist headquarters and base at Sigüenza. He had been aided in so doing by the bad weather, which deprived General Moscardo of his eyes, the air force

It was only on the 12th, that is to say five days after the Nationalists had started their offensive, that this body of troops was ready to go into action. Miaja would never have dared to send them so far north if by that time General Moscardo had taken Guadalajara and had cut the Cuenca road. On the contrary, he himself would have been in full retreat. It is possible, therefore, to estimate the immense damage done to the Nationalist position by the bad weather and the unfortunate incidents which had caused the offensive to be postponed from March 1 when the weather was fine to March 7 when an abnormal bad spell began.

## THE ATTACKS ON THE CORUNNA ROAD

The attack was launched at dawn with ample forces of tanks and artillery. It came as a complete surprise at first to the Nationalists, who were not entrenched, but only held isolated posts in villages and farm-houses. As the Russian tanks surged out of the rain and mist, followed by dense waves of infantry, there was little for the Nationalist outposts to do but fall back slowly on their reserves. These were not numerous, and were stationed some distance in the rear, with the result that by noon the Reds had advanced at some points over six miles and had made a great gap in the Nationalist left wing. The situation at that moment was so serious that General Moscardo, in his report to General Franco, said, "My left wing is completely turned."

The Reds did not push forward in the afternoon with so much speed. Out of the traffic muddle, swearing and sweating Legionary officers had managed to form in good order a column of some fifty motor-lorries. These rushed to the threatened point, carrying some old and disciplined Spanish banderas of the Legion and some companies of Requetes. These fresh units were thrown at once into a fierce counter-attack, which in its turn took the Reds by surprise. By that time the heads of the Red attacking columns were within one thousand yards of their objective, the main Aragon road with its mass of motor traffic feeding the whole Nationalist line of advance. Had they reached this road it would have been a minor disaster. But Legionaries and Requetes were by now coming up in numbers, and when night fell the Red line had been pushed back everywhere to over five thousand yards from the road. General Moscardo throughout the night continued to rush reinforcements to the threatened position, in so doing even evacuating farther south some of the

advanced positions he had wrested from the Reds three days before. The next morning the Reds, still in great numbers, endeavoured to renew their attack. They met with such a terrific barrage of machine-gun fire that nearly everywhere they turned and fled. At many points the Nationalist command, following a plan hurriedly prepared by the staff during the night, attacked in their turn so as to rectify the line and hold a series of strong points which would render any future Red attacks easy to repel. It was the 13th of March. The Red counter-attacks had finally failed. But it had also to be said that the Nationalist offensive had been brought to a standstill without having accomplished its basic objective, which was to force General Miaja to evacuate Madrid and to retreat towards Valencia. It had failed at a moment when Nationalist hopes were very high, and the corresponding gloom which followed was very depressing.

A deal of nonsense has been spoken and written about the Italian failure on the Guadalajara and also later on another alleged failure at Bermeo during the Bilbao offensive. I can write with impartiality about both, and I have to confess that I have been scandalised at the accounts current in Great Britain, which it is difficult to attribute to anything but deliberate intention to create friction between Great Britain and Italy by a series of calculated falsehoods. What happened at Guadalajara was that the main Italian column had pushed forward at very great speed, possibly too fast. On the third day of the attack some of the advanced units were almost within sight of the city of Guadalajara itself. One company with two tanks had passed Torija, leaving that village to be captured by the main body and had reached the plateau overlooking the Cuenca road. It had hoped to find troops

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from Brihuega on its right or at least on its right rear, but the terrible state of the roads had kept back all forces marching through Brihuega and down the Tajuna valley. This gallant little Italian company then tried to fight its way back to its main body on the Aragon road, and was almost completely wiped out. Many were taken prisoners by the familiar device used by the Reds, who stationed the Garibaldi battalions near where the Italians were so that stray parties would walk right into the Red lines imagining they were once more in touch with their own men. In the attack far to the rear on the left flank isolated posts holding farm-houses or small villages were in one or two cases also cut off. That was the extent of the "disaster," really only a minor set-back in a prolonged struggle, and reflecting no disgrace either on the Italian volunteers or on the Spanish Nationalist forces and command. The best proof that this was so was that General Miaja, after his much-vaunted victory, had not bettered the position of his forces by one iota and was shortly afterwards to lose definitely the few villages which he had gained. The initiative had not been wrested from General Franco.

Exactly the same can be said of the alleged Italian reverse at Bermeo. There a mixed Legion brigade known as the Black Arrows was pushing its way along the coast towards Bilbao. The Italian light column reached Bermeo by a very gallant dash along a road completely dominated by the Reds. They then established communication by water across the estuary leading to Guernica. Once more the dash of the mobile column had taken it ahead of the movements of other troops, which had to force a more difficult passage through the hills. For a few hours the Italian battalions were isolated in Bermeo because the road was cut. They were never in

any danger, they were never thrown out of the town, and the Reds never set foot in Bermeo again. After about eight hours of isolation other forces came up, the road was secured again, and the advance continued. But these two lies are only fresh examples of the extremes of mendacity to which the professional pacifist, be he British, French or anything else, will go if he believes that he can in any way injure or belittle a diplomatic or political opponent.

## BILBAO

JUNE 19, 1937

PART of the forces which had been stationed near Oviedo to be used in case of necessity had been transferred to the region of San Sebastian and Vitoria in preparation for an offensive on the Basque Separatists of Vizcaya. When the Guadalajara offensive came to its sterile conclusion and when it was plainly necessary to stage a fresh offensive, as much to occupy public opinion as anything else, the Nationalist High Command turned their attention to the Bilbao front. The terrain was extremely difficult, and it was obvious that if the Basques and their Red allies from Santander and Gijon resisted the campaign would be protracted. There was little possibility of the rush manoeuvre which had been projected for the Guadalajara attack. Two deep river valleys lead to Bilbao, the one from the general direction of Eibar and Durango and the other from the direction of Orduna, some miles to the north of the main Burgos-Vitoria road. High mountains, reaching to a maximum of 4,500 feet, rose on every hand; the Basque Separatists were quite at home among those rugged peaks and steep ravines and capable of defending them to the maximum.

Bilbao had, in recent Spanish history, been besieged three times and never captured. The Carlists had made two attempts in the first Carlist war and had been beaten back. In the first siege they lost their famous General Zumalacarregui, that genius of guerrilla warfare. Forty

years later, during the second Carlist war, Bilbao was besieged for 125 days, being completely cut off from the outside world, both by land and sea. Batteries set up on the northern heights threw thousands of shells into the city, so that hardly a house was left standing when a relief force finally marched in, just in time to save the city from surrender. It was thus that Bilbao came by the name of "Villa Invicta." It is interesting to note that though Bilbao was almost razed to the ground during its third siege it suffered very little during its fourth, and when General Franco's victorious troops marched in on June 19 they found it practically undamaged, save in the vicinity of the bridges across the Nervion, which had been blown up by Communists from the notorious Karl Liebknecht battalion, and where many houses had been wrecked by the force of the explosions and by huge fragments of steel which had been hurled through the air.

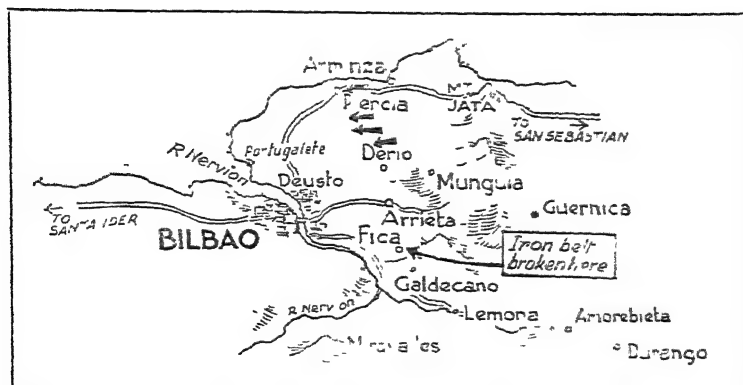
To understand the operations against Bilbao one must imagine that the road from east to west, the line of march of General Franco's troops, was barred by a series of rocky mountain ridges running more or less from south to north and thus forming so many barriers which had to be surmounted. This is merely a rough approximation, for the mountain system round Bilbao does not in reality obey such simple geometrical laws as those governing straight lines. The mountain ranges are complicated, but as General Franco nearly always approached them from east to west it renders the campaign easier to understand to take them as successive lines.

There were therefore four distinct stages in the approach to the Basque capital. The first stage was the freeing of the little town of Villareal, which, only a few miles out of Vitoria, had been blockaded by the Reds since



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December. The ineffectual Red attacks against Villareal, which for three weeks, held only by two companies of infantry, was surrounded and besieged by some five thousand Reds, is a typical example of the lethargy and lack of initiative which could always be associated with any Red plan of campaigning.



SKETCH MAP ILLUSTRATING THE OPERATIONS LEADING TO  
THE CAPTURE OF BILBAO

Villareal and the roads it dominates having been freed, General Solchaga, who under General Mola was responsible for the execution of the plan in its second stage, took by assault the southern extremities of the chains of mountains which, running to the sea, barred the main roads to Bilbao. He captured peaks like the Gorbea, the Amboto and Urquiola, varying from 4,500 to 3,000 feet high. These were mostly rude shoulders of naked granite thrust skywards, but their possession was necessary to enable each successive barrier to be attacked not from the front, where the Reds had prepared formidable defence lines, but from the flanks. Their possession was only needed for individual operations, and garrisons were not

kept on their forbidding peaks; so much so that later the Reds reoccupied Gorbea and held it, though in an entirely passive way, until a few days before the fall of Bilbao, when a hurried evacuation became necessary. Most of its garrison, rather than make a forced march in retreat, laid down their arms and surrendered.

The third stage was the progress across these lines of hills once they had been outflanked, first the Enchortas, then the Monte Calvo and the Lemona, the Vizcargui, Sollube and Jatta hills. This was perhaps the longest stage of all, because persistent spells of bad weather intervened, making air observation difficult and sometimes impossible, and also because the huge train of artillery necessary to search these mountain fastnesses for machine-gun nests had to be moved forward across such difficult country.

The fourth stage was triumphantly easy and rapid. It was the piercing of the much-vaunted "Iron Belt" and the march down from the heights into Bilbao.

I had the good luck to have private intimation that the fighting in the Bilbao area was really a definite campaign to secure the fall of the city and would therefore be of great importance. I decided, therefore, to make either Vitoria or San Sebastian my headquarters for the time being and to try once more to arrange a liaison service across the frontier to carry my messages. On April 7 I was in the newly occupied and picturesque Basque town of Ochandiano in time to witness the capture of the Urquiola range and San Anton de Urquiola, looking down on Manaria and the road to Durango. Though we did not know it at the time, this was merely one of the preliminary moves, like that of a pawn in chess, and was only to reveal its importance very much later in the campaign.

We all thought that the troops would push down from the heights and clear the direct Vitoria-Durango road almost at once, thus avoiding the immense detour that troops and supplies continued to make right round the whole mountain system to the valley of the Deva river.

The brunt of the attack was borne by Carlists and Moorish Regulares. When the air force and the artillery had completed their bombardment of the peaks, which had a canopy of swirling smoke, the infantry set out. Practically every company carried a flag, and all the men had white patches sewn on their shoulders. This was for the purpose of rapid identification in the difficult fighting on the slopes, so that the machine-gunners in reserve positions should not mistake their own troops advancing for Reds fleeing. The number of flags was so that the bombing planes should speedily recognise the units they were flying over and not drop bombs on them. Finally, we all cheered, General Solchaga and his staff with us, as we saw the gold and scarlet banner fluttering from the top peak of the Urquiola range. It was another step forward to the liberation of Bilbao.

The whole of this campaign in Vizcaya illustrated the immense difficulties attending the co-operation of bombing and machine-gunning aircraft, with infantry advancing actively across enemy positions. Now that Bilbao has been captured and the campaign is at an end, it is possible to state that in many attacks fully fifty per cent of the casualties were caused by errors on the part of the squadrons of bombing planes. At the height and speed at which modern bombing planes work it is exceedingly difficult, not so much to secure accurate hits, as to identify the exact points on the ground which are held by the enemy and which should be bombed and those held by

the advancing units of one's own army. Occasional accidents, all who are versed in military history know to be inevitable. How many times during the Great War did not our artillery fire on our own trenches? But the air danger is far greater, because the aerial bombardment has more terrifying effects. Throughout the campaign every method of signalling was tried and none proved entirely satisfactory. So much so that on the last days of the campaign, when the "Iron Belt" had been pierced, Nationalist planes came over and bombed the outposts of the First Brigade of Navarre, causing many casualties.

As I have said, every company carried the National flag. Men took with them immense strips of white linen which they placed on the ground, in accordance with pre-arranged codes, but generally in the form of an arrow pointing towards the enemy lines. Rockets and flares were used, and finally it was arranged that when an air bombardment was due the Nationalist field artillery would open fire with coloured smoke shells on the enemy positions which were to be bombed so as to indicate them clearly. At the same time every precaution was taken that accurate and speedy information as regards the advance of every unit of the Nationalist forces should be sent back at once. Portable wireless transmitting sets were carried by each company, and position reports were flashed back to brigade and divisional headquarters immediately after every move forward. These were transmitted via army at once to the air command, but there is a great difference, especially in such mountainous country, between knowing a map and recognising it on the ground.

There was an interval, mainly due to bad weather, after the capture of Urquiola before the Enchortas—three

peaks standing on the road to Eibar and Durango—were taken. I travelled a great deal in the sector during this time, and was able to estimate the forces collected for the final assault on Bilbao, for, though we were many miles from the Basque city, we all realised that the positions we were taking were but the outer works of the city's defences. On the right flank, advancing by the coast road, was the mixed brigade known as the Black Arrows. This was mainly composed of Italian volunteers in the new Legion formations, but it had an admixture of Spaniards. It was very mobile and was expected to take advantage of every move in the mountain sectors to make a bound forward along the coast. It carried out its part of the programme very well and thus played an essential though not dominant role in the plan of campaign. Then, in the difficult hill districts, where the resistance was greatest, came five Brigades of Navarre. Each was composed of a varying number of regular battalions and of Carlist or Requete and Falangist militia battalions. As was natural for a Brigade of Navarre, the Requetes were the more numerous. On the left of these corps came another Legion brigade, the Black Flames, and on their left yet another, the Blue Arrows. These, I understand, were almost entirely made up of Italian volunteers, but they played only a small part in the fighting round Bilbao, though they were used to relieve the tired-out troops in the subsequent rapid movements on Santander through Valmaseda.

The Requetes units were to be seen everywhere. They were fine-looking soldiers and they fought extremely well. During the long winter months they had been well trained, and all the Regular Army officers, who by now mostly commanded these battalions, were outspoken in

their admiration. The tercios of Oñamendi, Nuestra Señor de Begona, San Ignacio, San Miguel, to mention only those names which come most readily to my mind as being those of units I have personally seen in action, formed as brave and as dashing an infantry as one could find in any army. Their losses were tremendous. Captain de Seynes, a French officer, who acted as adjutant to the tercio of San Ignacio, told me that his battalion had been renewed from the brigade training depot three times before the final onslaught on the Lemona peak, when he himself fell wounded and when his tercio was actually wiped out by a Red counter-attack. There were just two hundred rifles on the situation report of the battalion, he told me, on the night of the counter-attack, and by morning one hundred and thirty had been evacuated, wounded, to the clearing-stations, and some seventy were lying dead on the peak. I talked to officers of the tercio of Nuestra Señor de Begona when they marched into Bilbao on Sunday, June 20, and they told me they had just seventy rifles left, and that to form a unit they were being temporarily linked with the tercio of San Miguel, with only forty-five rifles remaining. That was the price the Requetes paid for the honour of avenging their dead in the three previous sieges of Bilbao and for being the first troops to parade their flags through the conquered city.

The next stage in the offensive on April 24 was the piercing of the mountain barriers protecting Eibar, the town of arms manufactures, and Durango, practically an outer suburb of Bilbao. The Reds had fortified very strongly the three Enchorta peaks and that of Santa Maria, which look down the valley to Vergara, held by the Nationalists, and block the roads through three passes,

that of Campanazar and the double one of Elgueta, which on the left hand leads to Durango, and on the right to Eibar. Undoubtedly they fully expected the Nationalists to attack them on the front, and it seemed almost impossible for the blow to be delivered in any other way. The Red left flank was protected by the strong hills round Eibar, and their right flank rested on what appeared to be the invulnerable position of Mount Udalá. This mountain, some 3,000 feet high, is a great ridge of granite with a culminating peak and is only accessible by a few goat-paths along deep ravines. The Reds had two battalions occupying it with a score of machine-guns and a battery of mountain artillery. Their access to it was by the Campanazar pass.

The Nationalists wished everybody to believe that the attack was going to be frontal, and they expended an immense amount of energy, together with about five thousand air bombs and some thirty thousand shells, to make the Reds confident that the Enchortas were going to be attacked from the direction of Vergara. The whole body of Press correspondents was specially invited to witness the attack. We went to an artillery observation post and we saw one of the greatest air and artillery bombardments that had taken place during the whole war. Scores of batteries of every calibre from field-pieces to giant ten-inch howitzers sent their thousands of shells against the rocky heights. A hundred aeroplanes came and went almost without interruption, dropping their heavy bombs. And then nothing took place. A staff officer giving an account of the day's activities mentioned, as if accidentally, that there had been some slight progress in the Aramayona valley. And there was the key to the whole situation, as we found out two days later. The

Reds had been fooled, so had we. The bombardment of the Enchortas and of Santa Maria was merely to keep the Reds busy while the First and Second Brigades of Navarre moved down the Aramayona and other valleys, seized the reverse side of Campanazar and then boldly rushed the heights of Udala. The first tercio up the Udala was that of San Ignacio, and it lost fifty per cent of its effectives. The Reds apparently at first did not realise that an attack was being planned on their rear, and they actually allowed the assault companies to climb the ravines, seaming the side of the mountain, to within a few hundred yards of their front-line trenches before they tried to bring their machine-guns to bear on them. Two companies of the San Ignacio tercio with Captain de Seynes at their head had managed to reach a shoulder of the hill where they enfiladed the general trench line, and from that moment all was comparatively easy. Udala was held by the Nationalists, though it was not until forty-eight hours that it was properly mopped up and all its garrison captured.

Early the next morning the Second Brigade of Navarre was pushing along the road to Elorrio, behind the Enchortas. They had instructions to attack the heights from the rear at eight a.m. But at 7.50 their wireless signallers received counter-orders. The Reds, realising they were being surrounded, had evacuated the whole line of heights before dawn and had fled in the direction of Durango and Eibar. Orders now were to turn half left and pursue them through Elorrio towards Durango and at the same time to seize the hills overlooking Eibar—unhappy Eibar, already in flames. Eibar fell the next day. Nationalist tanks entered and occupied Durango at the same time, but as Red artillery was still in position and



several strong Red counter-attacks were made, they had to withdraw, and Durango, though surrounded and forming a kind of no man's land, was not occupied and firmly held till a week later.

The moment had come for the right wing to move forward. The 5th Brigade of Navarre and the Black Arrow Brigade, working in conjunction, covered the coastal area, and within a few days Marquina and Guernica had fallen. Guernica has been one of the Basque towns most talked of in the world's Press, and for reasons which it is difficult to understand. Imagine for a moment that the accusations of Aguirre, so well and faithfully reproduced in the Press, had been true. Suppose that this little Basque town, no more sacred, of no greater weight in the eternal scale of values than any other little Basque town, had really been bombed, and that really hundreds of its inhabitants had been killed. Would that have been any worse or any better than when the Reds bombarded the public gardens of Valladolid, for instance, and killed over eighty children, or when they bombarded Saragossa, killing over one hundred women and children? Yet what Radical or Socialist newspaper in Europe, which had screamed with banner lines over the atrocity of Guernica, ever mentioned the other bombardments? On the other hand, let us suppose that the allegations as regards Guernica were untrue or only true in part. What, then, was the wilful duplicity of those who stormed with indignation about reports of which they were uncertain and about reports which the slightest investigation would have shown at the very best to have been purposely exaggerated so as to provide a platform for Red propaganda? What did those who wrote in England and in France about the atrocities of Guernica know

of the case? Had any of them even heard of Guernica before? What did any of them know of the technique of air bombardments, to be deceived by such claptrap lies as were furnished by the ever-fertile propaganda office of Bilbao?

I admit I was not present at Guernica when the so-called bombardment took place and when certainly the city was burnt. But neither were any of the alleged eye-witnesses in Guernica at the time. They were all brought up later, mostly at night, when the city was burning, and were told what had taken place. Convenient witnesses were brought forward to confirm these stories. Since then I have read in European newspapers the more lurid and detailed accounts of what happened. One of the principal organs of opinion, through its correspondent in Bilbao, declared how not only had Guernica been burnt but that the bombing planes had set fire to all the farms around and that they were all blazing like torches. I have visited Guernica not once but a dozen times, and by every road into the town, and not a single farm or homestead outside of Guernica has been touched by flame or smoke. What then was it that this particular correspondent saw? Another report from Bilbao was so vivid in its impression of what took place that it actually described how the crew of the German planes leant out as the planes swooped down and threw their "hand grenades" at the people in the town. Did he mean bombs or hand grenades, and since when have either been thrown by hand from crews leaning out of planes? Mention this to an airman, and he will laugh, and yet it was such lying nonsense that swept with passionate emotion half Europe. Who were the people responsible for such stories I do not want to know, but I can record what I actually saw myself and what

I heard from British and French correspondents who entered the town before me. First of all, none of them saw the number of dead who would have been lying in the streets and in the highways leading to the town had even one-tenth of the stories told been true. Yet the Nationalists had had no time to fake the situation. The correspondents entered Guernica within a few hours of the first Nationalist patrols. So the hundreds of people shot down by the machine-gunning planes or killed by the bombing had all disappeared. The burnt-out farms had recovered their calm, green aspect. What I saw was the interior of the town, which I visited for hours on end, independently and alone. Certainly Guernica had been bombed by Nationalist planes, and many of these were presumably of German or Italian origin and had, perhaps, German or Italian pilots. The signs were there, as in many other towns near the front, for everybody to see. Did we complain when Villers Bretonneux was bombed by the Germans, or they when we did the same to a town immediately behind the lines? Are artillery parks or infantry dumps to be protected because they happen to be in towns ten or twelve miles behind the lines? This has nothing to do with the doctrine that open towns should not be bombarded, a theory which might have applied to Saragossa or Valladolid, but not to Guernica, which, to all intents and purposes, was part of the Red fighting machine.

Where air bombs had fallen the result was the same as at Burgos or Valladolid or Durango or Marquina—the house had collapsed, houses near by had suffered, the roadway was scarred and pitted. Nothing else had happened. At Guernica there were bombed houses, crumpled up and in ruins, but they were unscathed by

fire. At Guernica there were houses burnt out, their blackened façades outlined against the sky, but they were not pitted by bomb fragments, and the roadway showed no scars. I examined several buildings with great care to establish, in my own opinion beyond doubt, as far as this could be possible, the origin of the separate fires which had undoubtedly ravaged Guernica and burnt down more than three-quarters of the town. As a result I can state that it seemed to me—I am not an expert—that undoubtedly the fires were entirely apart from the destruction caused by air bombs. The majority of the burned houses—whole streets of them—showed not the slightest signs of damage by bombing. It has been said that this is because the bombs used were incendiary with slight explosive force. I know incendiary bombs when I see them, and I have seen them during the campaign: they were often used to set fire to the pine woods in which the Reds kept their ammunition dumps and their reserves. But I could not see in these burned-out streets of Guernica a single sign of an incendiary bomb having burst outside the burnt-out houses. None of them had burst in gardens or in the road.

I visited an isolated villa, a blackened shell. It, according to the Red theory, must have been hit by an incendiary bomb. Its garden was fresh with roses, the turf was green, the little pergola and the tool-shed were intact; they were not burnt or even scorched. And so we have to believe that one incendiary bomb struck and set fire to the villa and that no others fell anywhere near.

In the centre I saw the ruins, also blackened with smoke, of a large building. I do not know what it was, possibly a café or perhaps a store. It had a long glass awning on its principal façade. One corner had been

broken by an air bomb explosion and repaired. The hole where the bomb struck was visible in the street; the marks on the wall and on the glasswork could also be seen. But it was evident that the building had survived long after. Then had come this mysterious fire. The ruined and broken front wall was blackened, but the glass awning was intact. More, the electric light bulbs were all in place and, though smoke begrimed, were all intact. What strange explosive bombs, which left no trace of explosion behind them, which broke no glass, which never hit the road and yet set fire to all the houses!

A few weeks later, when the Nationalist attack had got dangerously near the vaunted "Iron Belt" at Amorebieta, I spent many hours watching that town. No Nationalist batteries were shelling it, no aeroplanes were in the sky, as there was a torrential downpour of rain. And yet it began to burn, just as Guernica had done, and Eibar before that, and Irun long before that. This time no German or Italian planes could be blamed, just as none of them could have been blamed for Irun. But none the less Amorebieta, another little Basque town, loved by its inhabitants and as sacred to them as was Guernica to its townsfolk, was burning. I visited Amorebieta later, and it looked just like Guernica. There were houses destroyed by bombs and there were houses which had been burnt. What is the conclusion? Both towns were hit in the normal course of war by bombs and damaged. Both towns were burnt, outside of any pretence of military necessity, by Communists or Anarchists enraged at having to abandon them to a hated foe. All else is untrue, all else is the fabrication of a system of propaganda which has lived on lies since its famous first declarations in July 1936 to the effect that the movement had been suppressed and

that the control of the Madrid Government had been restored throughout Spain.

The taking of the heights of Monte Calvo, Vizcargui, Sollube and Jatta was a slow process. General Mola, one of the ablest strategists, was determined that in these hills he would not give a single chance to the enemy to gain any local advantage by surprise, and so each further step forward was only taken after previous gains had been properly consolidated and miles of trenches had been dug and barbed-wire belts put in position. The Nationalist High Command was also still bringing up artillery and material for the final onslaught on the "Iron Belt" and repairing roads and railways behind the front.

I had two adventures during this period which were somewhat out of the way. Having gone to the outposts in front of Amorebieta, from which dense columns of smoke were rising, with a companion, I decided that it would be interesting to enter the little town. I had questioned scores of its inhabitants who, with suit-cases and bundles, were toiling in the rain up the hill paths, abandoning their burning houses, and they had told me that Amorebieta was entirely deserted and that only an occasional Red patrol came down into the main street. The officer in command of the sector gave his permission, and ordered three Requetes to come with us as guides and escort in the unlikely event of our running up against any Reds. With my companion, M Georges Botto, I started off down the slopes. We kept close to hedgerows and took advantage of every bit of cover we could find, as the hills in front, just a thousand yards distant, were held by strong forces of Reds. Half-way down we came across another officer who, with a strong patrol, was searching all the farm-houses for Reds who might be in concealment.

When he heard where we were going he expressed his regret he could not accompany us and added three more men to our escort. It was then that we started getting into trouble. The six Requetes of our escort, thinking that progress in single file behind hedges was not military-looking enough, suddenly deployed in line, and with rifles at the ready started advancing across the open. The result was what we expected. There came first one bullet, then another, and finally the grassy orchard through which we were moving was alive with the short, sharp whistle of machine-gun bullets. To the Reds it looked as if we were the advance guard of a company moving down to occupy Amorebieta. When at last we got to a sunken road we managed to recall our blundering though well-meaning escort, and Captain Aguilera, the Press officer with us, gave them orders not to move in the open and we set off again. Down the little lane, overhung with pink rambler roses, in complete safety as the machine-gun bullets were whistling well overhead, we reached a little farm-house on the very edge of the town. Here we left two of our escort as a sort of rallying party to guard our retreat, and on we went another couple of hundred yards to a turn in the street which entered Amorebieta not far from the church. M Botto was, with Captain Aguilera, leading at this point, and as they looked round the corner there came the crack, crack of bullets fired from close proximity, and the crash of a volley followed immediately by the loud rattle of a machine-gun. I crawled up to them and asked what had happened. We all three entered the corner house and this time looked cautiously through a window. There was another crash of rifle fire and tiles fell from the roof. It was apparent that the Reds, who had watched our progress, had sent a

strong party down into the town to try to cut us off. Our decision was not long to take. We had come to visit Amorebieta, not to capture it from a Red garrison, and so we retired up the hill, pursued every time we had to cross the open by that annoying whistle of bullets. Though one may know that the fire is inaccurate, that the bullets are really yards away, yet the impression is definitely unpleasant, and all the more so when one's back is turned to the direction of fire. As we were a large party I waited with two or three others and allowed half our number go on ahead, and then, one after the other, we made our little spurts across the open and dodged from tree to tree, feeling rather out of breath and rather self-conscious. All this time it was raining hard, and as we had an eight-mile trudge back to our cars we were all rather tired by the time we got back to Vitoria, then our base.

The other adventure was when very late one night a small party of journalists, including Mr. Massock, of the Associated Press, M. Max Massot, of *Le Journal*, M. Georges Botto, of the Havas Agency, and myself were returning from the front on Mount Jatta with our inseparable guide, Captain Aguilera. We had lost sight of Captain Aguilera's white car, one of the most temperamental cars I have ever seen. It either rushed ahead at some seventy miles an hour, taking corners in hair-raising style, or else it sulked and the whole line of Press cars was reduced to following it at not much faster than a walking pace. That night, though, it was in a hurry and had got far ahead. We had just skirted the base of the Vizcargui hills and were approaching the Monte Calvo, a sector we knew almost by heart, when we saw three red rockets go up from the Nationalist front line, which at that point



was only a few hundred yards from the road. A minute later inferno was let loose. Every battery began to fire, and as we stopped our cars and dimmed our lights it appeared to us as if every copse and hedgerow on the left of the road—the enemy line was on the right—contained a battery. There were field-guns, there were howitzers, and there were long-muzzled six-inchers. But they were not the only guns firing, for the enemy were plastering the countryside with high explosives and, judging from the pattering in the trees, with shrapnel also. Meanwhile the crest of the Monte Calvo and the trench lines running down to join with the Vizcargui hills were blazing with the fire from machine-guns, and the racket was enormous.

We had blundered right into the middle of a counter-attack. We did not feel we should progress with our cars along a road that was being swept by bullets and which we knew had several nasty corners where it swung almost right up to the front line and might be cut at any moment. On foot we walked forward to the nearest post to try to find out what had happened to our guide. But we had not gone more than four hundred yards when we ran right into him. He had put out his lights and was slowly nosing his way back towards us. We stood at that corner, next to two batteries, one Spanish and one Italian, which were firing as fast as they could go, and discussed the situation. Though we knew the ground so well it was difficult to form an opinion of what was taking place. We were told that all the reserves had been ordered to stand to, but that none of them had been sent up yet to the front line, where apparently all was going well. We shifted our position after about half an hour to obtain better shelter from stray bullets and to be a little farther from the

deafening noise of the batteries. We found a small stone hut which gave adequate protection, and round the corner we could watch the whole Monte Calvo line.

By this time it was evident that the enemy attacking waves must have filtered through the pine copses quite close to the front line, for above the rattle of rifles and machine-guns we could distinctly hear the explosion of hand grenades. The roar and din of the attack went on with sudden five minutes' intervals of silence for something like two hours, and it was only when all was quiet that we walked back to our cars. Even then the road control officer would not let us run straight down to Durango, distant only about four miles. He told us that the Red attack had been repulsed, but that in hand-to-hand fighting in woods it was never known whether some small party of enemy might not have got through some gap and that therefore the Durango road was barred until it had been closely patrolled by a section of armoured cars which would arrive just before dawn. We had therefore to turn our cars and make a forty-mile detour by way of Marquina, Eibar and Vergara before arriving at Vitoria at one o'clock in the morning.

Pena de Lemona was soon afterwards captured and held despite frantic Red counter-attacks that had to be repulsed three times before the Nationalists could entrench themselves and make their hold secure. Everything seemed to be going well, and then one afternoon the Nationalist army was plunged in mourning. It was June 3, and I well remember the day; I had been out to the front and returned half an hour ahead of our Press officer, now Major Lambarri. Outside the Press office I met the corporal of Requetes, in charge of the swift motor-cycle service, which carried my messages to the French frontier

to be retransmitted to London. Tears were streaming down his face and I asked him what was the matter. "General Mola is dead," he replied, "killed in an air smash."

I telephoned at once to General Headquarters and learnt that the sad news was true. I had spoken to the General only a few days previously, when he inaugurated the military bridge at Manaria, which linked Vitoria to Durango by the direct road through the Urquiola mountains, just freed from the enemy. I remembered how he had greeted me at the outset of the movement and that the first safe conduct given me on July 23, 1936, had been signed by him. The story of the cause of General Mola's death was extremely simple, and there was no truth in the statements published soon after, inspired by Red propagandists and so readily repeated, that there was a mystery and that Anarchists had at last with the connivance of a member of his staff taken their revenge.

General Mola, on the morning of June 3, was due to leave Vitoria for a staff conference at Valladolid. He remained over late studying a report from the front, and decided, much against the advice of his staff, to travel by aeroplane as far as Burgos and thence to go on by motor-car. He left Vitoria aerodrome in his own communication plane, with two members of his staff and with his own personal pilot, who was an intimate friend and associate of his. The weather was extremely bad and visibility almost nil. When only a few miles from Burgos the pilot began to descend, seeking the signals from the aerodrome. He went lower than he had intended and suddenly the plane flew straight into a hill. That was the tragic end. All the passengers were flung out and all were killed on the spot.

The loss of General Mola was felt very much at first, not only because of the glorious career of the General and the great military services he had rendered to the movement, but also because it was felt that General Mola's political tendencies might in a way correct any excessive swing towards the Left, not so much by General Franco himself as by some of his intimate advisers. General Mola, though Cuban born (Cuba in 1887, the year of his birth, was a Spanish colony) was an ardent Nationalist and was associated most intimately with Pampeluna, where he was buried, and the Requetes whose brigades he had tended and trained with such jealous care.

This accident, which caused a series of changes in the High Command, also delayed once more the operations against Bilbao. It was obviously necessary to allow the new commander of the forces in the north, General Davila, time to study the plan of operations and to make any changes he wished. The foreign generals—for the Italian units and the German artillery and air chiefs had to be consulted—were not always extremely amenable, and it had been part of General Mola's duty to smooth things over between the Spanish High Command, which always had the last word, and these foreign subordinates. In the circumstances General Franco himself thought he had better take a hand, as he was more readily listened to and obeyed than might be another Spanish general. The result, therefore, in the long run, was that the operations were speeded up. General Franco has always been a man of rapid decisions and in favour of the speediest movements on the field of battle. His position enabled him to issue decisive orders to his foreign collaborators, and so the war machine ran more smoothly and more speedily.

The vital day of the attack, and the day which really

spelt the downfall of Bilbao and of all the Basque resistance in the north as far as Santander, was Friday, June 11. On that day General Franco ordered the first attack to be made on the "Iron Belt." He had chosen his terrain extremely well, though I must confess that it shocked me when I arrived on the spot early on Friday morning and discovered that the Nationalists were to deliver, what I thought was foreign to all their strategy, a frontal attack in the very centre of a defensive line. I came up with the staff headquarters of Colonel Garcia Valino, of the 1st Brigade of Navarre, that morning at Mugica, and was told that the plan was for three of the Brigades of Navarre to attack across the Cordillera of Fica, and then the next day across the Urusti hills in the direction of Castelumendi, thus cutting right through the "Iron Belt." On the ground the plan, however, looked an extremely good one. The Cordillera of Fica, covered by the Red advance lines, was a continuation of the Vizcargui hills running at a slightly lower altitude in the general direction south-east to north-west. Once it had been captured, together with the village of San Martin de Fica, the next range of hills, and Castelumendi, the main line of Red resistance was only two thousand yards distant, and there were several good lines of approach for an infantry attack.

General Franco, always a believer in having the utmost strength at the vital spot, had crowded the valley behind Vizcargui and all the slopes of Monte Calvo with batteries. Never have I seen so many in Spain in so small an area. There were guns of every calibre up to huge twelve-inch howitzers, and all of them were firing at full speed. Some batteries had been advanced through the woods to the fringe of Vizcargui, where there were no roads which even a tractor could take, and bullock-carts with two slate-blue

animals were straining through the mud of the deep sunken paths—it had rained a few days earlier—carrying shells to the mountain batteries in position on the heights. It was evident that every nerve was to be strained to secure speed, and at every village behind the attacking line there were parks of tractors and lorries ready for any emergency, mule trains collected from every village for miles to the rear with peasant drivers pressed for the moment, while other bodies of peasants were standing by with picks and spades ready to be rushed up for road repair work at any urgent point. General Franco, who, with General Davila, had established his headquarters at Durango, was moving about the roads all the time seeing that his orders for speed were being carried out, while General Solchaga was at his advance headquarters at Larrebezuza town hall, where I saw him that morning and was able to bring up for him and his staff a little French claret, which they greatly appreciated.

After the bombardment, tripled by some twenty bombing squadrons from the air, Colonel Valino's units began to move along the hog's-back linking the Vizcargui range with the Cordillera of Fica, while the troops of the 5th Brigade of Navarre came up from the valley. Close though we were to the fighting (Colonel Garcia Valino was never more than two thousand yards from his most advanced units and usually much closer), it was difficult to follow the engagement taking place under the cover of pine copses and brushwood. Now and then there was a terrific rattle of machine-gun fire, and now and then the glint of the scarlet and gold colours of 'pain could be seen. But early in the afternoon we had left Mugica behind us, had passed through the village of Andramari, where a few Red shells were sullenly falling, and were

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climbing the Cordillera. From the top there was a view which extended to the opening of the Bilbao estuary to the north, but not revealing Bilbao

I had to wait several days for a sight of the Basque capital. Straight in front of us were the Urusti hills and Castelumendi, the "Iron Belt" itself. From the Colonel's command post, a small redan of sandbags, perched on the highest crag of the Cordillera, I could look down through his double prismatic periscope straight at the works of the "Iron Belt." They were plainly recognisable and easy targets for the artillery which was even at that moment battering away at them. The Colonel pointed them out, and I picked them up without hesitation. There was a line of blockhouses, clumsily covered with green branches, there a semi-circular machine-gun nest, there a series of V trenches, and there a main line of resistance. Squadrons of bombing planes were flying in line overhead, turning and coming down the front of the Red position, dropping their huge bombs in an orderly procession. They were so close that one could see the bombs, great shining silver exclamation marks, oscillate as they fell through the air. "Much too close for comfort," a staff officer grumbled, and he pointed to several stiff figures, wrapped in blankets, lying in a shell-hole near us. "Good fellows, those; killed this morning by our own planes."

Strange, but in the clear Spanish sky it was often possible to watch the flight not only of air bombs but also of shells. Heavy shells from the big howitzers were clearly visible, but the most amusing of all to watch were the pennated shells from the three-inch trench mortars. These had an extremely high angle of flight, and it was interesting to watch them go upwards like silvery birds,

glistening in the sun, turn over, invisible for a second, and then explode.

The attack on the Castelumendi positions was set for two o'clock in the afternoon. From my position half-way down the slopes of the Cordillera I could not have been five hundred yards from the Nationalist advance guards, and before the attack began there was a constant whistle of machine-gun bullets from the Reds. I had been watching the whole series of Red lines closely during the bombardment and had even been able to see the Reds running to their dug-outs when the bombing planes approached and leaving them as soon as that danger was over. The Red garrison had withstood the heat of both the artillery and the air bombardment extremely well. What was our surprise, therefore, when suddenly we saw them pouring out of the trenches, crossing the roads which led westward to Bilbao. I counted a good hundred of them, and I must have missed twice as many. What was up? I searched the line of crests and then saw the reason. Far away on my right were fluttering the flags of the 5th Brigade, while straight in front of me along the topmost line of pine trees I could see progressing at an incredible speed the foremost flag of the 1st Brigade. Other columns and other flags were swarming up the ravines and crossing the line of V trenches. The Red garrison, which had withstood the bombardment, had given way the moment they saw their enemy close at hand. It was difficult to understand. Still more difficult to understand when one knew that every position thus yielded by them they obstinately counter-attacked in the hours of darkness, with great bravery though small success.

It was thus that the "Iron Belt" was pierced. All that evening and all that night General Franco pushed his



troops through the gap thus caused. The 1st and the 5th Brigades went right on almost without interruption to the heights of Santa Marina, which look down on Dos Caminos, the southern suburb of Bilbao. The Black Arrow Brigades, which had captured Plencia, were pushing down in their sector, cleaning up all the ground west of the "Iron Belt," and were within seventy-two hours to seize Las Arenas, the fashionable seaside suburb of the Basque capital. Other troops were assembling at Galdacano and Lemona, and the Reds were not to be allowed a minute's respite.

During the next two days I inspected the Reds' concrete defences along the "Iron Belt," both in the hills of Castelumendi and Santa Marina and also at the hinge it made down on the river level at Galdacano. The machine-gun emplacements were good. The barbed-wire belts were deep. But three-quarters of the system, owing to General Franco's energetic attack, had never been used. The Reds were also faulty in never having dreamt that the system might be pierced and in not building switch lines to prevent the whole barrier being overrun at once.

There is a story of deep interest behind the Red plans for the building of the "Iron Belt." They impressed not only manual labour but also the services of all the engineers they could lay hands on. One of these, who took a prominent part in designing the line of defences, was a Nationalist trapped in Bilbao. He carried on his work and waited his opportunity, and managed at the beginning of June to cross the lines, taking with him complete plans of all the defences of Bilbao. I saw him at Colonel Valino's headquarters, in the blue uniform of a Captain of Falangists, with his precious drawings in front of him, on which were indicated every machine-gun position,

every trench and every sap. This was undoubtedly of great use to the Nationalist High Command. At Galdacano the Reds had built an enormous network of trenches—some five thousand yards were covered by them—and the machine-gun posts in echelon were in six lines. Here again, however, few of the positions ever seem to have been occupied. It is true that the positions were out-flanked on the north by Santa Marina and on the south by the Pena de Lemona. The fall of Galdacano might have been followed almost immediately by the entry of the Nationalists into Bilbao, as it gave them full command of the suburb of Dos Caminos and the southern gates of the city. Generals Franco and Davila had decided, however, to make a peaceful entry, if possible, and therefore to capture, first of all, the line of heights both east and south-west of the city.

On the day before Bilbao actually fell, that is on June 18, I climbed the heights dominating the Santander railway station and only a thousand yards or so from the southern limits of the city. Major Lambarri, the new Press officer, was accompanying us, and he moved forward faster than any man of his bulk—he is not thin—I have ever seen. We were on a footpath which wound round the hill, on the top of which we could see friends from a Falangist battalion waving to us. They went on waving, and we progressed at Major Lambarri's rapid pace until suddenly we found that we had run straight into a machine-gun barrage. Fortunately it was slightly high, but it was on all fours that we turned and made our way back to shelter. The signs from above had not been of welcome but of warning. When we cut straight up the hill to the top we were greeted by officers who told us to keep low as the machine-gun fire was very persistent and

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they had just lost two men from stray bullets. We made our way to the front of the position where we could look down on Bilbao, and sat there drinking in the scene. The light was not very good, as the sun was sinking, but Bilbao looked beautiful and peaceful. Gradually the machine-gun fire ceased, and a few minutes later we were all standing up and walking round on the forward slope of the hill and not a single bullet whistled by. I felt then that all was over and that the Reds were not going to fight for Bilbao any more.

The next day, Saturday, our little group of war correspondents with two Press officers, Major Lambarri and Captain Aguilera, were standing on the hill of Santo Domingo under the shadow of the giant wireless masts looking down again on Bilbao. It had not yet been occupied, but here and there on the right or nearer bank of the Nervion we could see a Nationalist flag fluttering on a roof. On the winding road from the city there came a small open motor-car. In it was an officer of the Nationalist tank corps and two police officers from Bilbao. They had come to announce that five battalions of Basque Separatist troops still in the town were prepared to surrender and that, as far as they knew, all the Red extremists had left Bilbao and that there would be no further resistance. As they made their report, there was a sudden burst of machine-gun fire, but from far west of Bilbao on the Santander road. The Nationalist troops encircling the city had reached the Santander road and were occupying it in force. The news agency representatives rushed to motor-cars or to motor-cycles to send off the news that Bilbao had been captured. It was true in one sense and yet, as we found an hour or so later, somewhat premature, as no soldiers of General Franco's army

had yet set foot in the city. We were all feverish with excitement and pressing Major Lambarri to proceed with us down the hill through the suburb of Begona and into Bilbao. The Major was as anxious as we were to move forward, and within half an hour we were swinging downhill as fast as we could go. Half-way down we ran into an advance post of Falangists who refused to allow us to go on. But just then a colonel passed, and when he was appealed to he said: "I cannot give you permission, as nobody is to be allowed to cross the line of pickets and enter Bilbao, but of course I can always look the other way and not know that you have gone." And with great courtesy he looked the other way, though five minutes later he was still waving his hand to us as we plunged into the suburbs of Bilbao and were lost to his view.

In the suburbs we saw nobody. In the distance, at street corners, a form would appear and disappear with almost suspicious speed. We made our way through the silent steel-works of Echeverry and down by short cuts to the streets on the right bank of the Nervion. There were a few broken windows, but no signs of the fearful air and artillery bombardment which, according to Red reports, had wrecked Bilbao. There was indeed hardly a house showing more damage than a few displaced tiles or a few broken panes of glass. On the quayside we met the first inhabitants of Bilbao—half a dozen pretty girls, a score of old women and men, and a few children. They looked at us in amazement, and then broke out into a feeble cheer. They were still dazed by the sufferings of the last months and still in doubt as to whether the good news that the siege was over was really true. But they cried "Viva España" and clustered round us. We said we wanted to cross the river to the centre of the town, and

they took us along the quay to where there were some boats. Before leaving, the Reds had blown up all the bridges, including the new swing bridge which had been inaugurated only a fortnight earlier. One of the leaves of the bridge, weighing some two hundred tons, was standing upright in the middle of the Nervion. The other had been blown to pieces, and we saw fragments of it weighing many tons three hundred yards away. In the vicinity of the bridges there were many badly damaged houses, but they had suffered as a result of the dynamite explosions, the work of the infamous Karl Liebknecht battalion, and not from shell or bomb. Barges were still smoking in the river, burnt to the water's edge, but we scrambled on board a couple of leaking wherries, and pushing off, soon rowed across, the correspondents and the Press officers vying with each other at the oars. Up the landing-stairs as fast as we could go, and along a side street into the Gran Via we went.

The Gran Via was almost empty, but we could divine more than see that thousands of pairs of eyes were scrutinising us through the windows of the tall houses which line this very fine avenue. Three of us, myself included, were wearing the scarlet beret of the Carlists, two of us, Major Lambarri and Captain Aguilera, were in uniform, and there was another in Falangist blue. This, and especially the scarlet berets, seemed to convince the inhabitants, and they began to pour out into the streets, while the Nationalist flags, which they had kept hidden for so long, fluttered from balcony to balcony, and at the same time the few Basque Separatist flags, easily distinguishable with their green flame, disappeared. I saw one old woman who had tied the Separatist flag to her foot and was dragging it behind her in the dust. It was the

one jarring note of the day. But the crowd that now poured along the Gran Via had become as demonstrative as the city had previously been cold and reserved. We were seized upon and pulled this way and that. I saw Major Lambarri surrounded by women, old and young, and kissed on both cheeks and on the hands. He was striving to shout "Viva España," but his voice was strangled with emotion, and besides, he had to cope with a score of people at once who wished to enfold him in their arms, to take him off his feet and shoulder him, to seize him by the hand, to ask him a dozen questions. We started laughing, and then it was our turn. There were shouts of "Viva Navarra," a compliment to our Requete berets, and Captain Aguilera, the Falangist Señor Molinero, and all the rest of us were separated and each became the centre of a crowd of enthusiastic patriots, simply mad with joy. Processions were formed and marched up and down the Gran Via with the National flag at their head. We were assembled in the midst of one which escorted us in triumph to the palace of the Provincial Assembly, a magnificent stone building—Bilbao is a city of great edifices, every bank being housed in a palatial building. There the old Separatist Guards, men in blue uniforms, with scarlet Basque caps, six-footers every one of them, presented arms and flung wide open the great iron gates which had been kept closed since President Aguirre had fled the city.

We were glad for a moment to be able to leave the crowd and breathe freely. It had been embarrassing, and my companions and I had wondered whether it would not have been tactful perhaps to have pocketed our scarlet berets, as we felt that possibly we were being cheered and welcomed under false pretences. The crowd thought we

were real Spanish Requetes and not merely honorary members of that patriotic body. But it was difficult to do so once the shouting and cheering had started, and we also realised that collectively we had done much for Nationalist Spain, and that that was the reason that the Carlist Junta had honoured us by giving us positions in their organisation. Major Lambarri merely laughed when I mentioned it to him, and said: "Don't boast; I was kissed by much prettier girls than you." Captain Aguilera, I am afraid, was not quite so pleased. His strict military mind and his personal political tendencies made him view this involuntary association of foreigners in what he looked upon as an occasion for intimate Spanish patriotic rejoicing with rather a jaundiced eye, and he was somewhat sarcastic and biting in his comments. We all made allowances, however, for the strain of the moment, and let his remarks pass without objection, and without making the facile retort that our very presence in Bilbao, ahead of the advance guards of his army, was a proof of the valuable services that the corps of war correspondents were rendering every day to the cause of Nationalist Spain.

Then we saw the battalions of the Basque army, which had offered to surrender, march along the Gran Vía. They carried the white flag, and two of the battalions piled their arms in the middle of the street at the foot of one of the great electric light standards—rifles, machine-guns, revolvers in a great heap. The other three battalions, whose depot was on the right bank of the Nervion, crossed the river and dumped their arms in front of the town hall. The men looked in good shape, though rather thin and pale. Their uniforms were clean, and their rifles and weapons were in the best of order. I learnt, however,

that these battalions had not done much real fighting for the past months, but had been kept in Bilbao as a sort of local guard to overawe the Red extremists and prevent them from burning and pillaging. It was thanks to their presence that Bilbao was not burnt by extremists like the men of the Karl Liebknecht battalion which, throughout the Bilbao campaign, distinguished itself, not by its fighting qualities, but by the skill with which it dynamited, burnt, and pillaged.

The famous "Fifth Column," that is to say the members of Right political organisations who had succeeded in remaining in hiding during the campaign, also took part in the protection of the city. On the last night of the occupation by the Reds, they appeared at various points on the roof tops and began to fire on all groups of Red militiamen who were trying to force their way into houses or public edifices to set them on fire. The Red militia suffered heavy losses from this sniping, and as it had no time to take the buildings by storm, it simply evacuated the city so as not to be caught by the advancing Nationalist troops.

When we crossed the Nervion on our way back to our cars, a tired thirsty body, we found that barges had been towed into position across the river, with planks roughly secured between them and the quays. I would have preferred my waterlogged wherry, for the waters of the Nervion were black and swirling, and the planks, which were only eight inches broad, were swaying and very insecure.

Sunday saw us all back in Bilbao, this time for the triumphal entry of the troops—Requetes, Falangists, and units from the Regular Army. All Bilbao turned out to greet them, and we marched along with them, but this



time, to appease all querulous spirits, we put our scarlet berets in our pockets and walked bareheaded. There were quite enough Requetes without our presence, and the crowd this time was able to shout itself hoarse and cheer the real heroes of the Bilbao campaign, the gallant men of the Brigades of Navarre.

Little rest was to be given to the soldiers, for the pursuit had to be continued at full speed. And so the rest of the campaign with its marches and counter-marches towards Santander went on. Village after village captured, Vizcaya cleared of the foe, the province of Santander entered, and the last steps taken to reduce the ultimate stronghold of the Reds in the north of Spain. That done, 100,000 men with their immense train of artillery, their squadrons of planes rendered available for other fields of battle, confidence in the ranks of the Nationalists runs high that soon the last battle may be engaged and that final victory may crown their efforts. International intervention is, self-confessedly, the sole hope at present of the Valencia Government. The Barcelona Government and Red Catalonia will not help the southern Red Government. The Catalan revolutionaries are living in a strange state at the present moment. They are not waging war against the Burgos Government. It is long since any Catalan militia made a serious attempt against Huesca. They are not even dreaming of what might be the retribution when Valencia falls and when Franco's victorious troops march northward. Instead, they are enjoying their usual political dissensions, one weak government is being followed by another weaker still. Anarchists and Communists alternate in power and in arresting and shooting each other. There is more fighting in the streets of Barcelona, from time to time, than on the Aragon front.

Madrid, therefore, is the key to the situation. The fall of Madrid, either captured or surrounded, means the fall of Red Communism in Spain, and Madrid is bound to fall unless there is foreign intervention to save the Communist régime. It is difficult, however, to believe that the people of Great Britain, to speak of our own nation alone, would be so foolish as to permit such a crime to be perpetrated.

There are people in London, but especially in Paris, who have tried to make our flesh creep by extravagant stories as to how Italy and Germany are securing a political foothold in the Iberian peninsula. I would recommend to all such that they pay a month's visit to Spain and talk to Spaniards. Spain has always been impervious to foreign influence, and in fact, often not very grateful for foreign aid. Spain is intensely nationalistic and individualistic. The moment the war is over the Spaniards will thank their foreign allies and will point to the harbours where the transports, duly beflagged, will be waiting for them. And as for territorial concessions or zones of influence in the Balearic islands or in Morocco, that is all stuff and nonsense.

# THE FUTURE OF SPAIN

WHEN the Civil War is over, when Catalonia, the Asturias, and Viscaya, have surrendered, then the real dangers and the real difficulties will begin. That is a paradoxical phrase which I have heard many Spaniards pronounce, and there is undoubtedly much truth in it.

Fighting side by side, especially if victory be not too long delayed, and if in its path there be found minor successes sufficient to interest the multitude and to maintain their enthusiasm, keeps together political sects which would otherwise be in opposition. War conditions and the ever-present danger of a possible Communist victory, which would mean in Spain death for scores of thousands and ruin for everybody, are great counsellors of prudence.

General Franco knows that, having been a self-imposed commander and ruler, his action was ratified by the millions in Spain because of the dangers the country was running, because the people knew that the Spain of tradition, the Spain of the Catholic kings, was being threatened by a foreign philosophy of violence and of revolution.

Military juntas have ruled in Spain before now, but they have never ruled for very long. They have changed their nominal heads, they have changed their form, but ultimately they have always had to call upon some form of civil government, either absolute or parliamentary, to take the reins of office from their hands.

Once the mortal dangers of the triumph of Communism

have been dispelled by victory, then the differences of opinion which had been kept in the background must come forward again. At present there is a war administration ruling the country, and ruling it fairly well. But in times of peace Spain cannot be governed by military commissions. Military requisitions and military purchases will have to come to an end. Normal rules of commerce and banking will have to be restored.

General Franco has, it is true, sufficient authority, presumably accrued at the end of war by victory, to maintain for some time in Spain a purely civil dictatorship for the purpose of restoring law and order and securing the reconstruction of Spain's industry and commerce, which has suffered so severely. Once this has been done General Franco will have to turn his mind to what gradual changes may be necessary to prepare the way for the final civil régime which is to govern the country in the future.

There are two obvious alternatives. There is the Fascist totalitarian state with a dictator, with Franco at its head, and there is a totalitarian state with a king at the apex and beneath him a Prime Minister with absolute powers as long as he enjoys his monarch's confidence. With the collateral institution of a Chamber of Corporations to advise on the technical questions of public administration, commerce, industry, agriculture, and labour, this would mean that sober public opinion should normally reach the Sovereign and influence him in his relations with the Prime Minister at the head of the executive. A Prime Minister who became totally unpopular would in such a manner soon lose the confidence of the monarch and be replaced by him. Political agitation would not, however, be allowed.

There are two bodies of opinion in Spain which stand

roughly for these two solutions. There are the Falangists, holding advanced social opinions, and in many cases, but for the fact that they are Catholics and Patriots, little different from the Socialists they have been fighting. They desire a dictatorship pure and simple. Though it is difficult in a civil war to ascertain exactly how political views run, it may be said that the majority of the Falangists are, in theory at least, opposed to the restoration of a monarchy. How far they would consider their political doctrine forced them to fight against such a solution, granted the majority of their other political aims were satisfied, it is difficult to know.

The Falangists are also, and the Carlists to a lesser degree, in a difficult situation, since General Franco, foreseeing the dissensions and the rivalry which might arise immediately after victory, took the bold step of forcing the union of the two rival parties. There is now no separate Carlist or Falangist militia, in name at least, though it is difficult to deprive militia units of their *esprit de corps*. There is now only one political party in Spain and that is the united party of Falangists and Carlists. Their programme is that of the Falangist Party with reservations, while the Carlists have been promised that when the time is ripe the question of monarchy may be brought up for discussion. This later promise was, indeed, given in such terms as almost implied a favourable consideration.

The Carlists, who are the more sober of the two organisations, accepted this decision with calm and indeed with patriotic fervour, as they had already accepted the enforced though honourable retirement into private life of their leader, Don Manuel Fal Conde. The Falangists as a majority, a great and overwhelming majority, also

accepted the dictates of General Franco. It is a fact that since the imprisonment and execution of their first great leader, Don Jose Antonio de Primo de Rivera, son of the late dictator, the Falangists were without a head. Hedilla, a sturdy, capable-looking man, had endeavoured to take Don Jose's place, many say by rather doubtful methods of threats of personal violence, but he did not weigh as much as a straw when he tried to place himself in opposition to General Franco. When the unification of the two militias was ordered Hedilla, with some outside support and with a number of his local leaders, postulated for the post of supreme head of the joint militias. If this had been granted, he would have had more power than General Franco. The Generalissimo, however, wisely decreed that he himself would be the nominal head, and that the effective authority would be exercised by an Army general, actually General Monasterio. Hedilla took violent objection to this and, believing that he was much stronger than he really was, ventured to set himself up in personal opposition to General Franco.

The scene has often been described to me, and if it is not accurate in every detail I am certain that it is not substantially false in any important feature. The Falangist leader, who had hurriedly consulted his friends, and who in fact seems to have been egged on by many of them, rang up General Headquarters in Salamanca and demanded to be received by the Generalissimo at two o'clock the next afternoon. Hedilla arrived to time with his customary escort of stalwarts in blue uniform carrying sub-machine-guns. They waited down below while their leader went up the double marble stairs past the Moorish guards into an ante-chamber. A few minutes afterwards the escort was invited into the guard-room' and there

their weapons were taken from them, they being told that at the Chief of State's palace none were allowed to go armed except the guard itself and such officers as were on duty.

Meanwhile the great clock on the landing of the bishop's palace, for that was the seat of General Headquarters at Salamanca, ticked slowly on while Hedilla paced up and down impatiently in the red and gold tapestried room in which he was alone. Twice he rang the bell and an aide-de-camp appeared, only politely to beg the Falangist chief to wait in patience as the Generalissimo was very busy. Finally it was nearly three o'clock when Hedilla, vociferous with anger at what he looked upon as a deliberate insult, was ushered into General Franco's presence. He strode across the room faster than the officer who was accompanying him and began an angry tirade. General Franco waved to a chair and bade him take a seat while he signed to his aide-de-camp to withdraw. Nobody knows exactly what took place during the interview, which lasted half an hour and was extremely stormy, the sound of Hedilla's voice being clearly heard in the ante-chambers. But suddenly the bell rang, and when General Franco's aides-de-camp entered they were briefly told to arrest Hedilla and hand him over to the police. Hedilla himself seems to have been so amazed at this order that he was speechless. Some eighty of his most intimate friends and advisers had been arrested that day and they were all indicted with having plotted against the security of the State. Hedilla was allowed to go to South America into exile. The case against him was heard in his absence, and he and many of his companions were sentenced to death, though this sentence was afterwards commuted to imprisonment or exile.

The amazing thing about the whole dramatic event was that though the news of what had taken place circulated widely within a very few days, there was not the slightest resentment apparent in Falangist circles, and General Franco was, if possible, even more popular than before.

The Carlists, on the other hand, have shown no feeling whatsoever as regards their forced union with the Falangists, for whom, frankly, they do not much care. The reason for this is that the Carlists, with their century-old tradition of "God, King, and Family," have not the same need of the personal magnetism of a born leader. Their faith and their tradition stand them in equal good stead, and they might even fight better merely for a man they respected than for any general whose personality might seem to them to be too great. The Carlists have been accustomed throughout history to having many leaders. They would make a dictator, however, of not a single one of them. They demand, when the time is ripe, that a King should be chosen supreme head of the State, and beneath him that authority should be held by a Prime Minister with his body of experts but without the trammels of democratic constitutions and universal suffrage, which they despise.

A great deal of religious mysticism is mingled with their political faith and is upheld with an ardour typical of intense fidelity to their cause. It should be remembered that the last Carlist rising was brought to a close after a terrible and bloody suppression as far back as 1876. Since then, it was commonly thought by the superficial Spanish politicians that Carlism had ceased to exist. What, then, was their surprise when on July 18 and 19, on the signal for the revolt against Communist barbarism



being given, the old Carlist emblems and flags waved once more in the breeze, and thousands of armed and trained men appeared from nowhere.

In Navarre, the Carlist stronghold, this might have been expected. I have spoken, however, to eyewitnesses in Andalusia and Estremadura and in the mountain valleys of Castille, and they all have voiced their astonishment when suddenly the scarlet beret appeared and they saw stalwart young men shouldering rifles and marching off to join the army of religion and order.

Only the other day I travelled up a long and little-known valley, that of the Jerte river, a tributary of the Tagus, from Plasencia to El Barco de Avila, a mountain town perched high on the plateau some forty miles from Avila proper. I noticed that there, many miles from Navarre and almost cut off from the outside world, the villagers were all Carlists. The valley is one of intense beauty in the spring. Completely walled in by high mountains and running almost straight from south to north, it is privileged in being sheltered from the prevailing cold winds. The result is that every square foot of soil is cultivated. The terraces cunningly cut in the sides of the valley are full in April of flowering fruit trees, carefully tended, and the grape vines are showing their shoots. The solitary road which feeds the valley and passes from side to side of the Jerte river in nearly every case went over a temporary wooden bridge. The explanation was simple. A Red column at the end of July, before the armies were organised, had tried to march up the valley. The women and children were sent hurriedly to El Barco de Avila, which was safe, and the men, taking their rifles and even their shotguns, had massed to meet the invader. They unfurled their red and gold banner,

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taken from its hiding-place in the church crypt and, blowing up the bridges to render the enemy's advance difficult, they destroyed that column so that none was left to return to Madrid and boast that he had set foot in the Carlist valley of the Jerte.

That represents the Carlist spirit, and so also do the following extracts which I make from the little book known as the "Ordenanza del Requete". Written by General Varela, long before the rising, it is the Catechism, as it were, of the Carlist youth. On its title page it lays down the duties of the Carlist soldier as follows.

Thou of the scarlet beret wilt be A soldier of the  
Faith and of the Holy Cause of our Tradition  
Thou shalt faithfully fulfil thy duties, exalt thy principles  
and hold thyself in readiness for the call  
Thy watchword shall ever be: "God, Country, King "

The qualities and duties of the perfect Carlist soldier or Requete are then given as follows:

Be:

Knight without stain.

Disciplined in spirit.

Strong for the service.

Jealous of thy reputation.

Volunteer for danger.

Intrepid.

Excellent companion.

Incapable of betraying thy ideal.

Subordinate and punctual as is fitting.

Strong, both physically and morally.

Never frightened, always imperturbable.

The Scarlet Beret whose personal honour and spirit

does not stimulate him to good deeds, is of little value in the service of the Cause.

Suffer in silence, from cold, from heat, from hunger and thirst and infirmities, pain and fatigues.

Let patience attend thy sufferings and thus valour will reward thy patience.

Never forget that investiture as a soldier of the Tradition implies exemplary discipline, and that that virtue is the greatest of all duties of the Scarlet Beret and the principal condition of our institutions.

With discipline and with the observance of thy glorious watchwords, then thou wilt be worthy of the honour of being called a Scarlet Beret.

With such moral discipline and with the physical excellence which comes from an open-air life, and for the majority life in the high mountains of Navarre, it can hardly be wondered that the Requetes or Scarlet Berets (*Boina Roja* is the Spanish term for a Carlist soldier) hold such a privileged place in the Spanish Army.

Their political intransigence, the birthright of a century-old tradition, has been laid aside for the duration of the Civil War. Afterwards the Carlists are prepared to see a military dictatorship continue to hold power until such time as the dynastic and constitutional problem may be solved. When that time comes the Carlists will stand for their solution, which implies the return of a Bourbon to the throne of Spain. The fact that the succession is looked upon by them as being open, at present, is symbolised by their nomination of Prince Xavier of Bourbon-Parma to be "Regent of the Carlists' Rights" after the death in Vienna at an advanced age of the last Carlist Legitimist Pretender.

This devotion to the ideal of absolute monarchy, even when no heir or candidate is immediately designated, may seem extraordinary to some modern minds. All I am concerned with is to lay emphasis on the fact that this devotion does exist and partakes almost of the nature of solemn religious dogma in the minds of hundreds of thousands of sturdy young Spaniards of every class, from that of the hidalgo to that of the student, from that of the landowner to that of the ploughboy. I have said that no candidate has been designated. That is true, though naturally many possibilities have been canvassed. First of all, the claims of King Alfonso himself are set aside as being impossible of fulfilment.

The Carlists will not have him. They reproach him with his bowing down to Liberal Constitutionalism, which is anathema to them. They fear that he is not sufficiently religious, and they dislike all the tendencies of the old court.

There are many Bourbons in the world. But there are few who would be looked upon as fitting by the Carlists, who, being particular as to the persons they allow to serve in their movement, are even more so as to the head they wish ultimately to place over all Spain. Undoubtedly at present the name most debated is that of Don Juan, younger son of King Alfonso. He is known to be of good health, his training and career in the British Navy is taken to be of excellent augury, and his good looks would easily endear him to the Spanish people. Two questions remain to be solved from the Carlist point of view. Would he be willing to rule as a Carlist monarch, and would his father be willing to stand aside in his favour? In many quarters, it is whispered, an affirmative answer has been already given privately to both these questions. It is certain that nothing has been made public.

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Another story is being whispered in Carlist circles which has its importance. It is as follows: Early in the war Don Juan wished to serve in the Nationalist army, but was rather abruptly requested to leave the country. The other day he wrote to General Franco recalling this fact and offering to put his services and special training at the disposal of the Nationalist Government. He asked to be given a warship to command. General Franco, so the story goes, replied, thanking His Royal Highness for his gallant offer and regretting that he, the Generalissimo, could not accept it "because it would be unfitting that a future King of Spain should risk his life in a naval skirmish with Red pirate ships."

It is felt everywhere that the ultimate decision, once order has been restored, lies with General Franco, and that were he to decide that a monarchical restoration was in the best interests of Spain, he could easily sway over all but the most obstinate Falangists to his way of thinking. It is for that reason that so much importance is attached in Royalist circles to the insistence of General Franco in his recent speeches on the necessity for retaining "the historical traditions" of Spain and also to the articles, published freely and without evoking disapproval, in which the glorious conduct of General Monk, who restored Charles II in England, is extolled as being alone worthy of a great patriot.

I have recently seen General Franco in Seville. He was in the great Alcazar or Moorish palace of Pedro the Cruel, receiving the Moroccan chieftains and the pilgrims who had returned from Mecca. The Alcazar is a glorious building, its outer crumbling walls framed in bougainvillea, some purple tendrils of which were still outlined on the red bricks, while great cascades of pink, white, and

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yellow roses fell from the old embrasures. Within, the splendour of a royal palace is maintained, and powdered flunkys in breeches and scarlet silk stockings hold the doors ajar.

In the marble patios, with their delicate pillars and Moorish carving, the blare of trumpets and the sound of Eastern music, as the multi-coloured throng of chanting pilgrims passed through, seemed quite natural. Those grave and bearded men, with their *babouches*, their white robes, and their prayer beads, were at home in the marble courtyards of their ancestors.

Within the ornate Ambassadors' Hall, with its great octagonal gilded ceiling, General Franco, Chief of State, received first the Moorish dignitaries and then, bowing low before him, the pilgrims. On a low dais a great scarlet and gold chair of state had been placed. But General Franco stood in front of it to make his speech of welcome and he remained standing, contrary to usual eastern ceremonial, while the pilgrims passed.

I have spoken to General Franco of many questions, including the future of Spain, but he always remains smiling and enigmatical when reference is made to the final régime and says: "The people of Spain will make known their will at the appropriate moment."







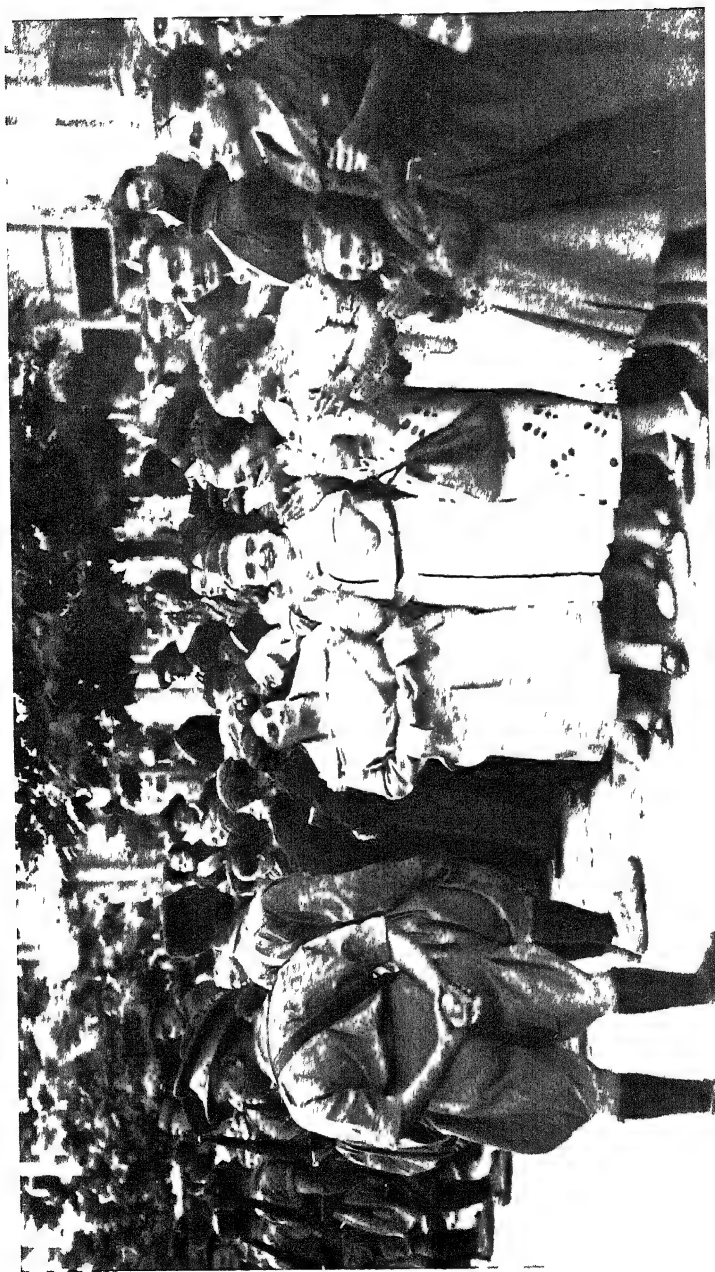




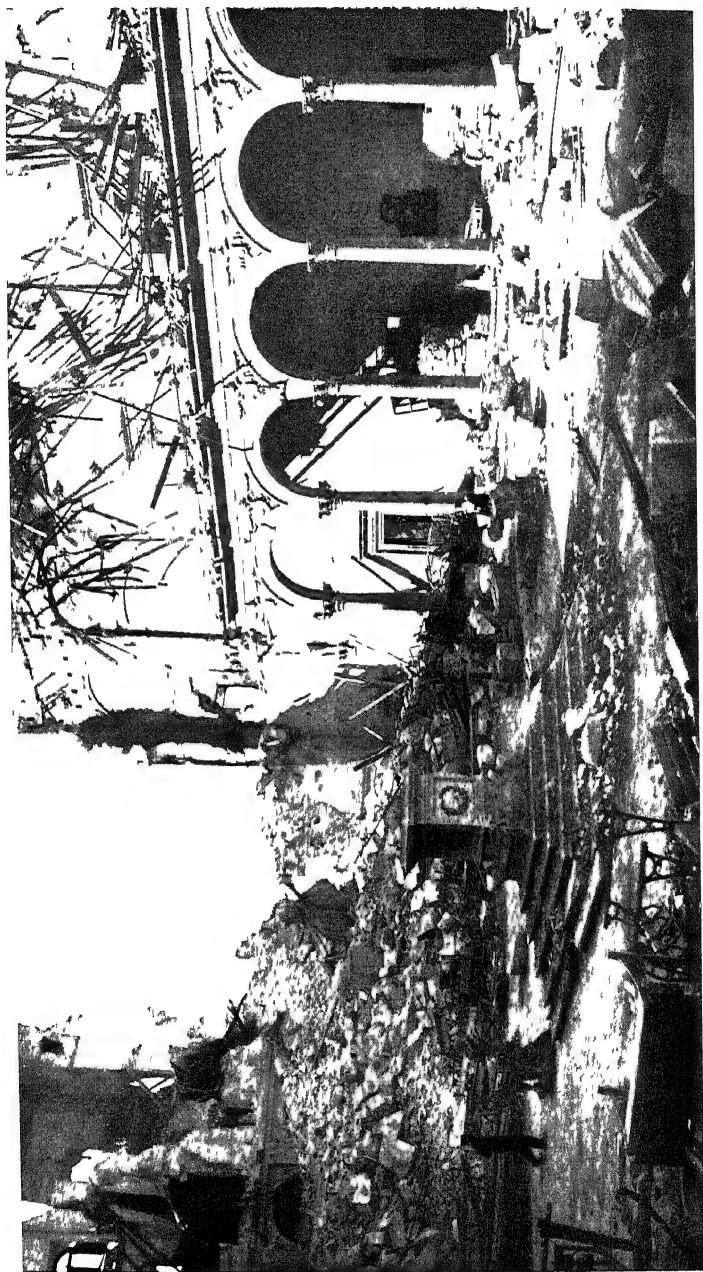
3 GENERAL QUEIPO DE LLANO



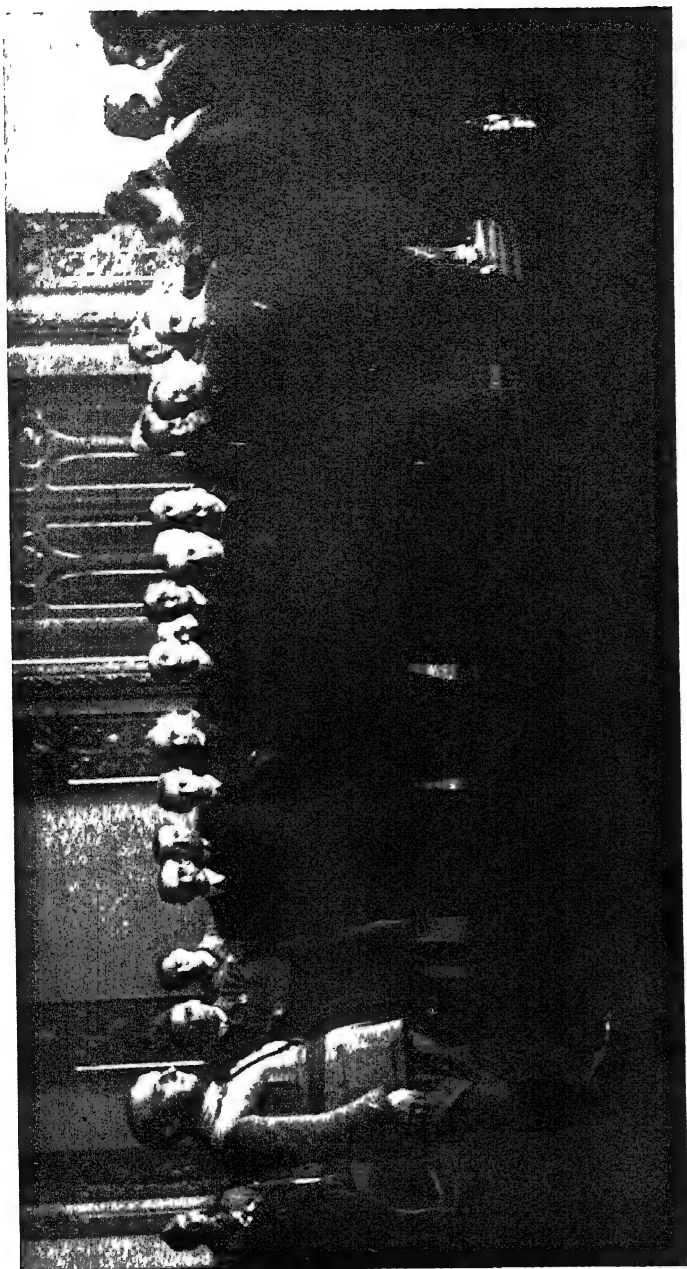
4 MAQUEDA, SEPTEMBER 1936, AFTER ITS CAPTURE BY THE NATIONALISTS SHOWING THE DEVASTATION IN THE PARISH CHURCH DURING THE RED OCCUPATION



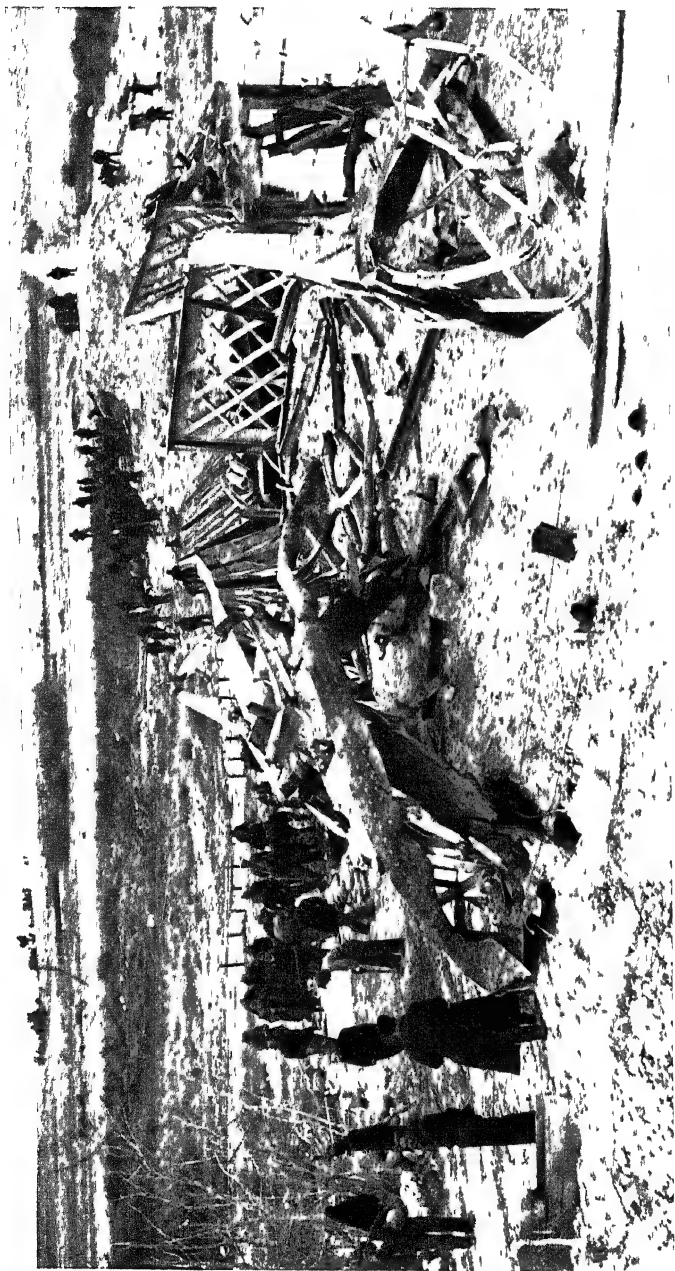
5 BURGOS THE ENTRY OF THE MOORISH TROOPS WELCOMED BY THE CIVILIAN POPULATION



6 THE ALCAZAR OF TOLEDO, SHOWING THE COURTYARD AFTER THE SIEGE



7 GENERAL FRANCO RECEIVING THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE FROM PROMINENT CITIZENS OF BURGOS  
AFTER HIS APPOINTMENT AS CHIEF OF STATE

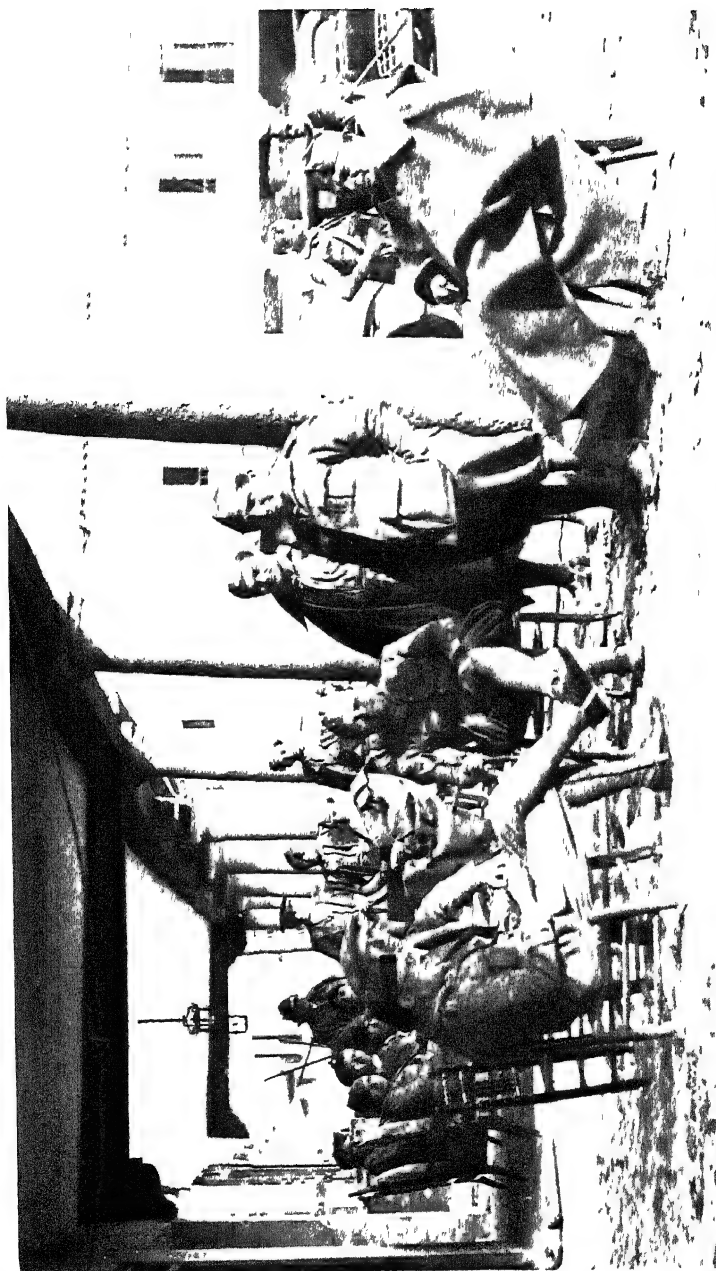


8 THE GUADARRAMA FRONT, OCTOBER 1936 DESTROYED BRIDGE ON THE ROAD FROM VALMOJADO  
TO YUNCOS



9 GENERAL VARRIA AND A GROUP OF HIS STAFF OFFICERS





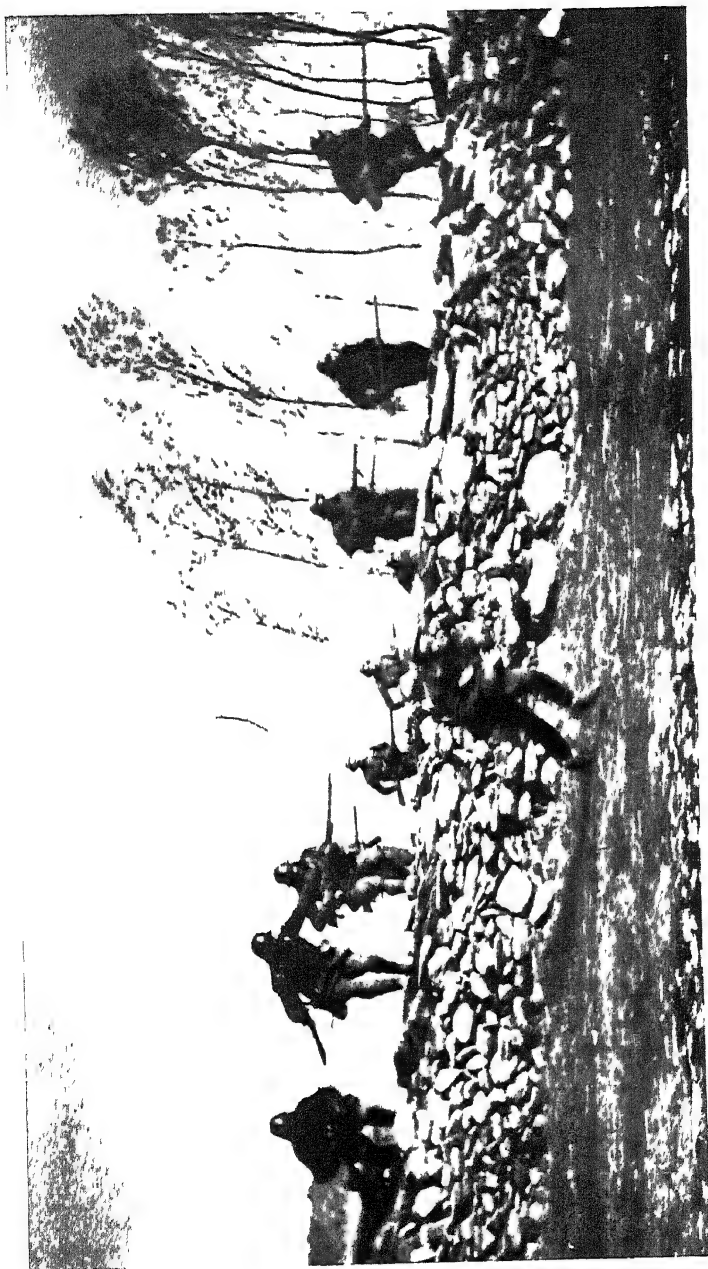
IO A GROUP OF OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE LEGION RESTING AFTER THE TAKING OF  
NAVALCARNERO



II NATIONALISTS ADVANCING IN THE SUBURBS OF MADRID



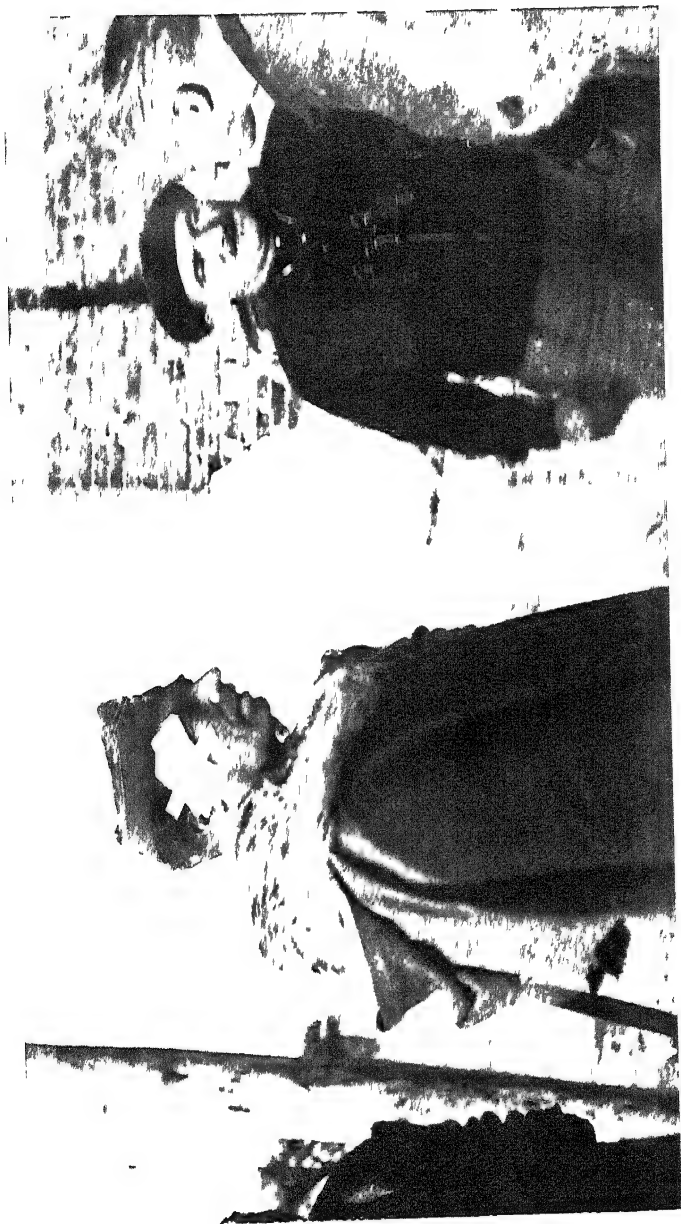
12 DURING THE ADVANCE ON MADRID



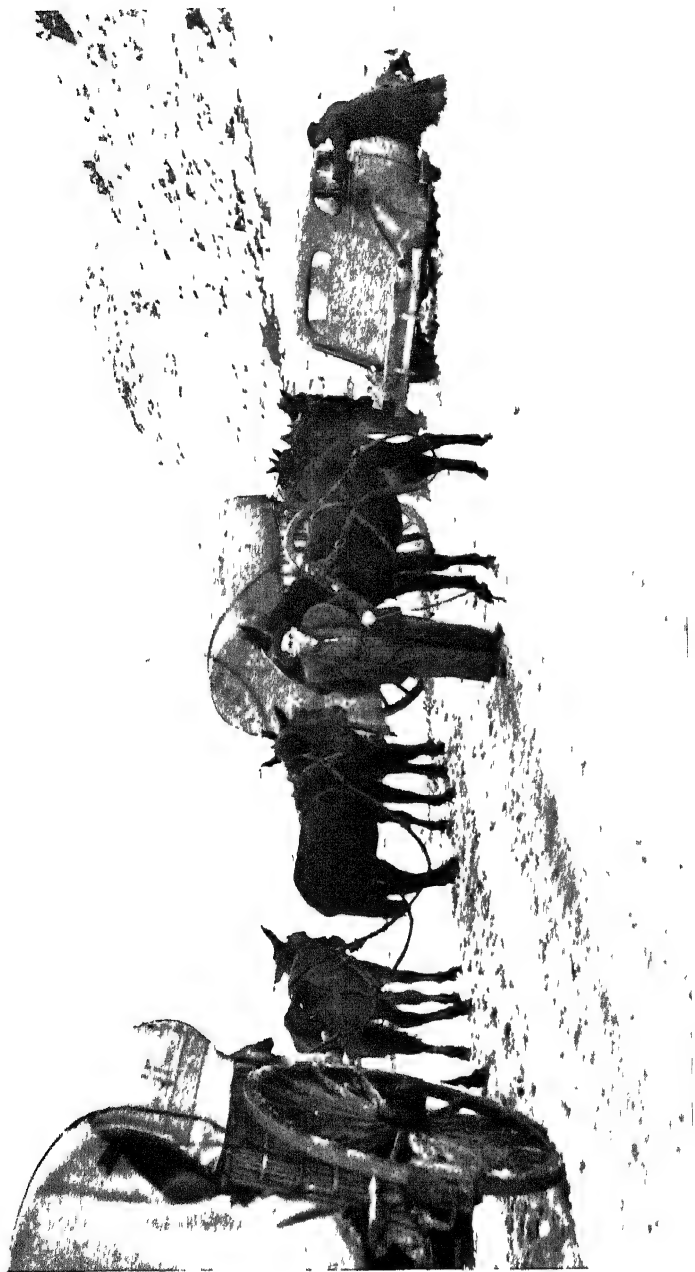
13 NATIONALIST TROOPS GOING INTO ACTION ON THE MADRID FRONT



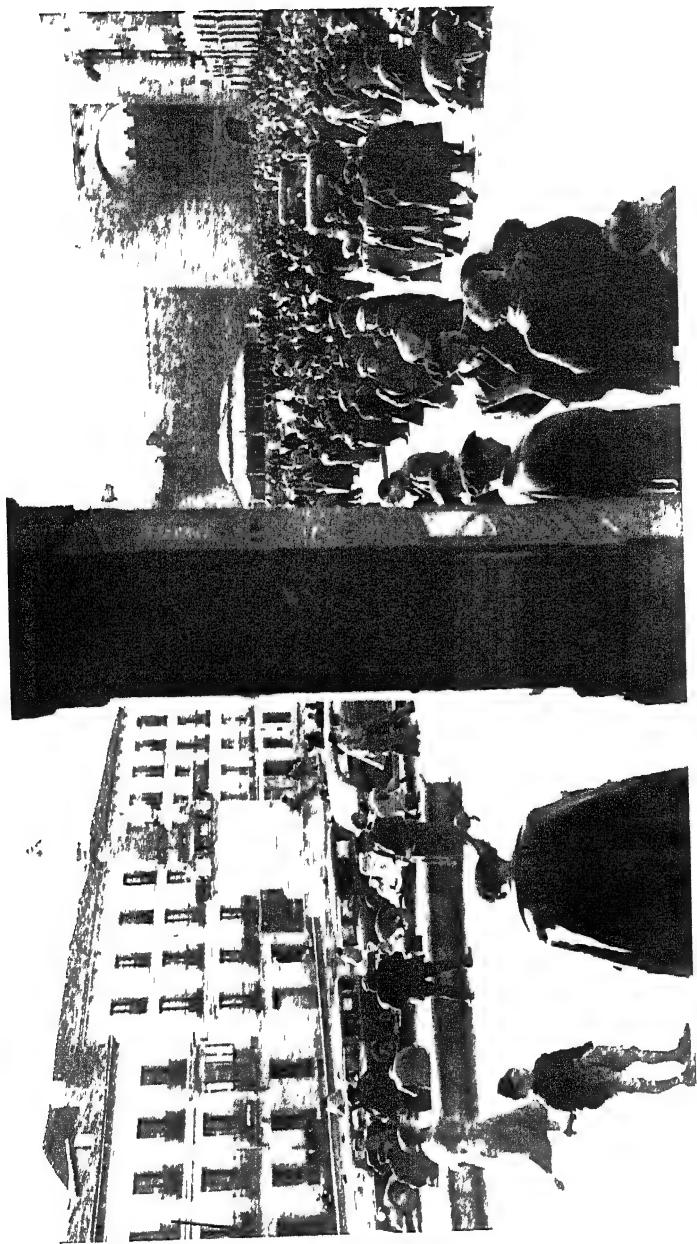
14 THE AUTHOR, WITH VICTOR CONSOIL (*center*) AND JIAN  
D'HOSPITAL (*right*) AT BRUNLII, NOVEMBER 1936



15 ON THE MADRID FRONT, NOVEMBER 13TH, 1936 THE AUTHOR, WITH COLONEL TELLA (left), WHO HAD BEEN WOUNDED THAT MORNING.



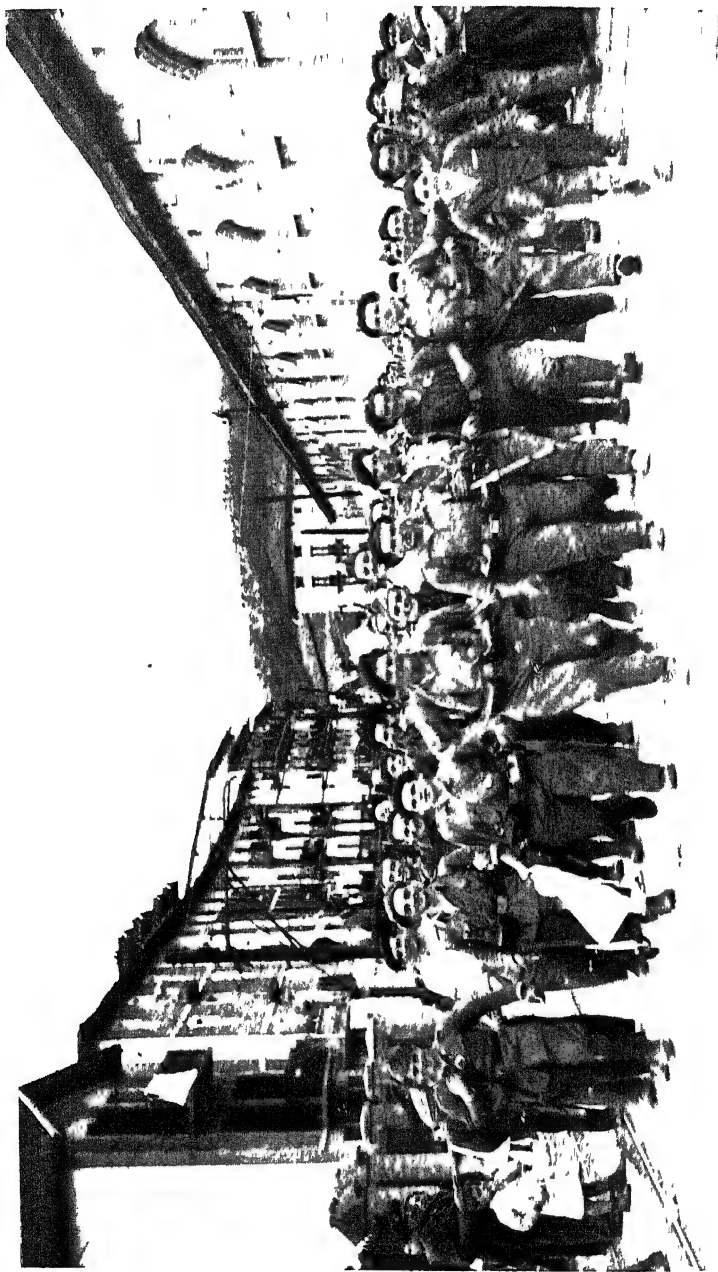
16 THE AUTHOR'S CAR SNOWED UP ON THE ROAD FROM AVILA TO TALAVERA LA REINA,  
NOVEMBER 1936



17 THE GRAND PLACE AT AVILA WAITING FOR THE LAISSEZ-ALLEZ

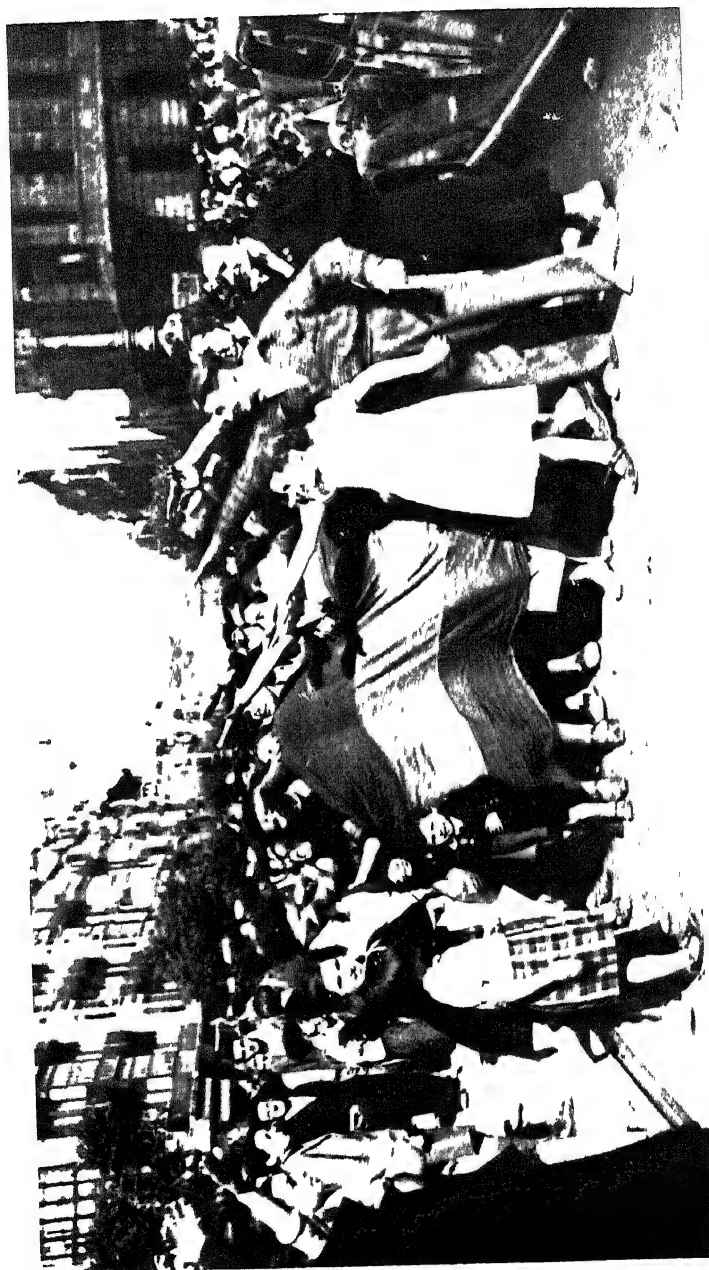


18 ENTRY OF THE CARLIST TROOPS INTO TOLOSA

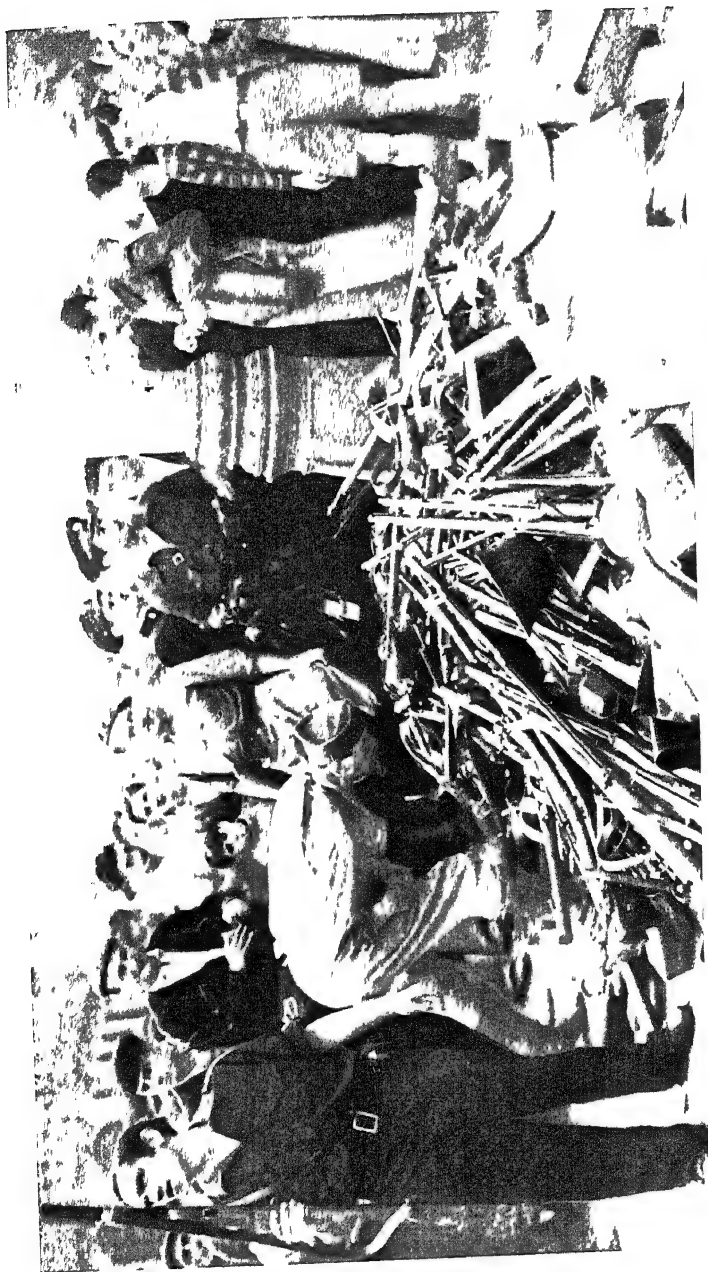




19 THE ENTRY INTO BILBAO SCENES OF POPULAR REJOICING



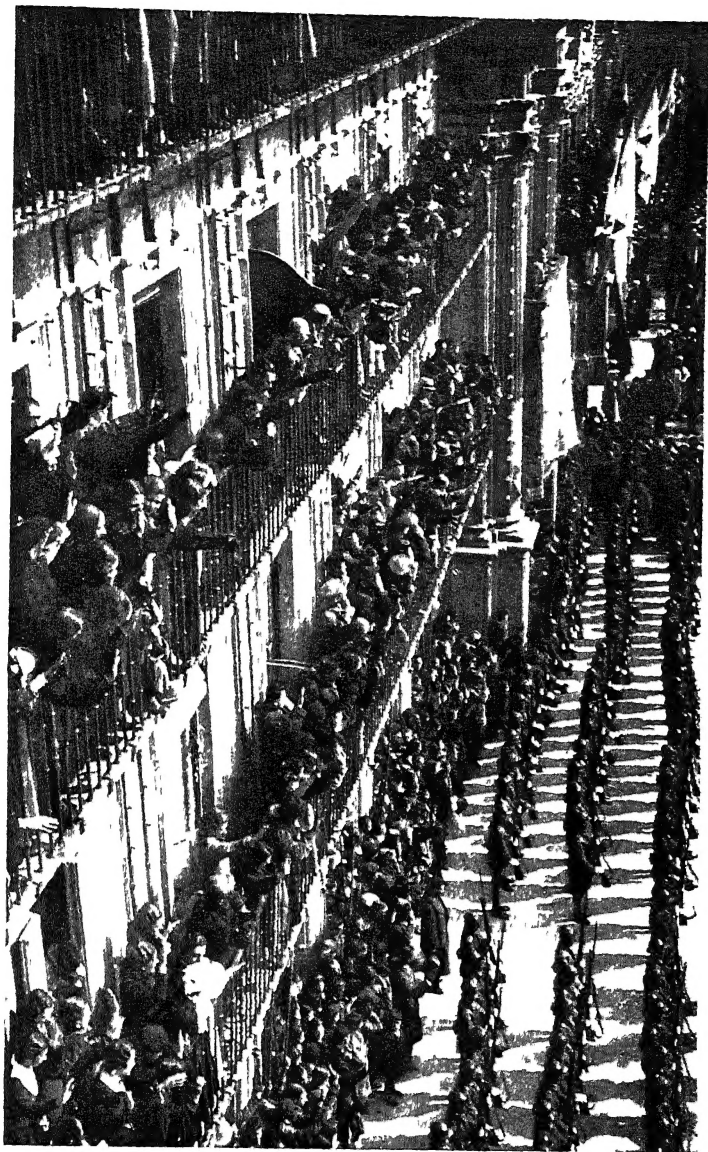
20 THE ENTRY INTO BILBAO UNFURLING THE NATIONALIST FLAG



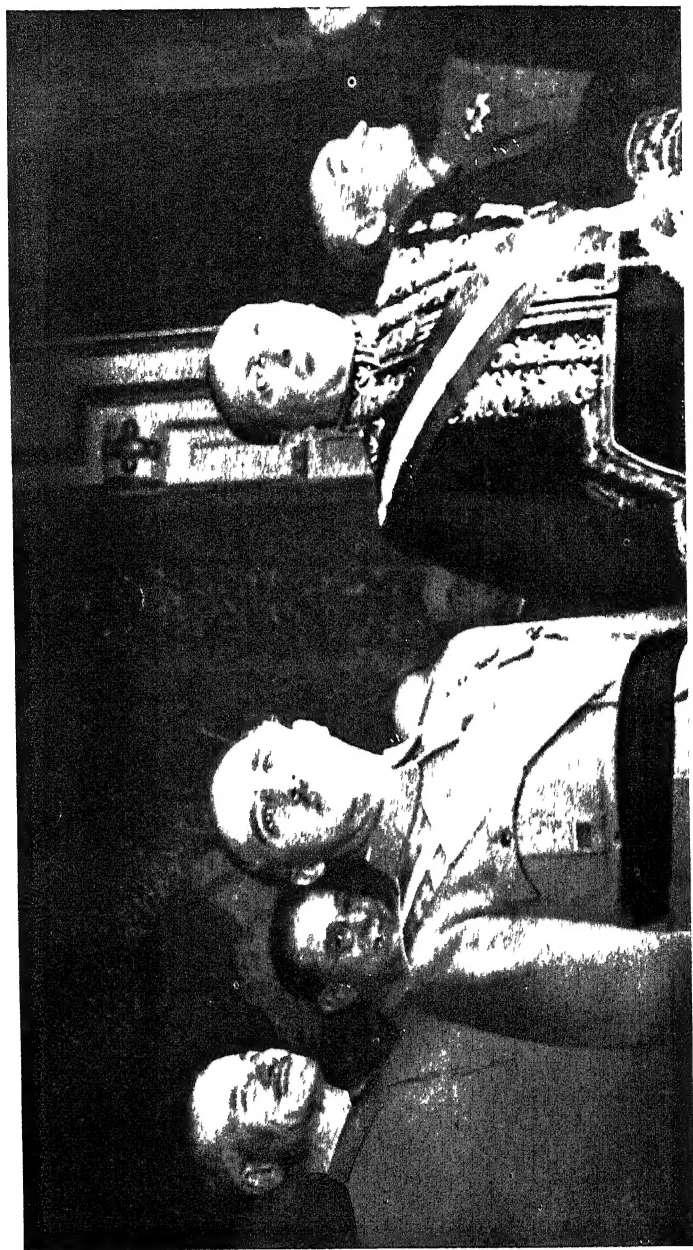
21 ARMS TAKEN FROM THE RIFTS PILED UP IN FRONT OF THE TOWN HALL OF BUI BAO



22 BURGOS THE CIVILIAN POPULATION ACCLAIMING GENERAL FRANCO AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL  
CONJUNCTION OF THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN NATIONALIST ARMIES



23 SALAMANCA, NOVEMBER 18, 1936 ENTHUSIASTIC SCENES AT THE  
OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF THE SPANISH NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT  
BY ITALY AND GERMANY



24 SALAMANCA, MARCH 1937 GENERAL FRANCO AND THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR AFTER THE LATTER  
HAD PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS, ACKNOWLEDGING THE APPLAUSE OF THE CROWD

